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literature

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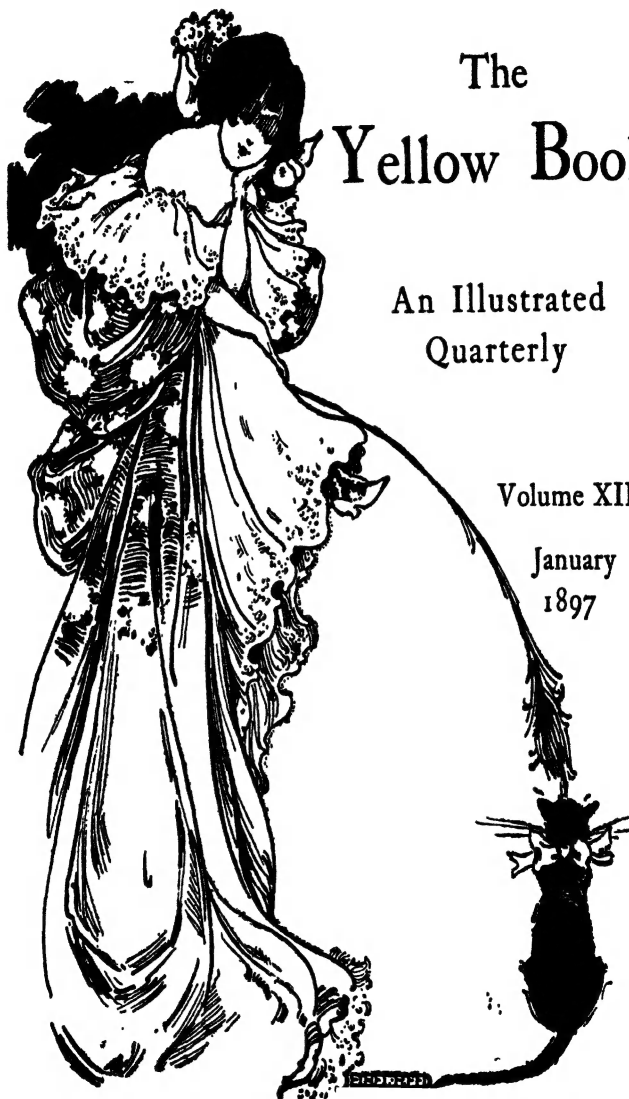
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The Yellow Book

Volume XII January, 1897

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The Yellow Book

An Illustrated
Quarterly

Volume XII

January
1897

John Lane, *The Bodley Head*, London & New York

BALLANTYNE PRESS
LONDON & EDINBURGH

Bodley Heads

No. 6 : Portrait of Miss Evelyn Sharp

By E. A. Walton



The Lost Eden *

By William Watson

PROFFERING fortunes
Out of his indigence,
Royal the dowry
Man promised his soul.

"Not as the beasts
That perish, am I," he said.
"Mine is eternity,
Theirs the frail day."

Crown of creation
Long he conceited him
Next to their fashioner,
Lord of the worlds.

So

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The Lost Eden

So in an Eden
Dwelt he, of fantasies.
Here and not elsewhere
Eve was his bride.

Eve the hot-hearted !
Eve the wild spirit
Of quest—the adventurer !
Eve the unslaked.

She it was showed him
Where, in the midst
Of his pleasance, the knowledge-tree
Waiting him grew.

Wondrous the fruitage,
Maddening the taste therof;
Fiery like wine was it,
Fierce like a sting.

Straightway

Straightway his Eden
Irk'd like a prison-house.
Vastness invited him.
"Come," said the stars.

Thunderous behind him
Clang the gold Eden-gates.
Boundless in front of him
Opens the world.

Never returns he!—
Never again,
In the valleys that nurtured him,
Breathes the old airs!

Only in dreams
He seeks his lost heritage,
Knocks at the Eden-gate,
Wistful, athirst.

Ah,

Ah, he is changed—
The sentinels know him not !
Here, ev'n in dreams,
He may enter no more.

She and He: Recent Documents

By Henry James

I HAVE been reading in the *Revue de Paris* for November 1st 1896 some fifty pages, of an extraordinary interest, which have had, as regards an old admiration, a very singular effect. For many other admirers, doubtless, who have come to fifty year—admirers, I mean, once eager, of the distinguished woman in question—the perusal of the letters addressed by Madame George Sand to Alfred de Musset in the course of a famous friendship will have stirred in an odd fashion the ashes of an early ardour. I speak of ashes because early ardours, for the most part, burn themselves out, and the place they hold in our lives varies, I think, mainly according to the degree of tenderness with which we gather up and preserve their dust; and I speak of oddity because in the present case it is difficult to say whether the agitation of the embers results, in fact, in a returning glow or in a yet more sensible chill. That indeed is perhaps a small question compared with the simple pleasure of the reviving emotion. One reads and wonders and enjoys again, just for the sake of the renewal. The small fry of the hour submit to further shrinkage, and we revert with a sigh of relief to the free genius and large life of one of the greatest of all masters of expression. Do people still handle the works of this master—people other than young ladies

ladies studying French with *La Mare au Diable* and a dictionary ? Are there persons who still read *Valentine* ? Are there others who resort to *Mauprat* ? Has *André*, the exquisite, dropped out of knowledge, and is any one left who remembers *Teverino* ? I ask these questions for the mere sweet sound of them, without the least expectation of an answer. I remember asking them twenty years ago, after Madame Sand's death, and not then being hopeful of the answer of the future. But the only response that matters to us perhaps is our own, even if it be after all somewhat ambiguous. *André* and *Valentine*, then, are rather on our shelves than in our hands, but in the light of what is given us in the *Revue de Paris* who shall say that we do not, and with avidity, "read" George Sand ? She died in 1876, but she lives again intensely in these remarkable pages, both as to what in her spirit was most interesting and what most disconcerting. We are vague as to what they may represent to the generation that has come to the front since her death ; nothing, I dare say, very imposing or even very becoming. But they give out a great deal to a reader for whom, thirty years ago—the best time to have taken her as a whole—she was a high clear figure, a great familiar magician. This impression is a strange mixture, but perhaps not quite incommunicable ; and we are steeped as we receive it in one of the most curious episodes in the annals of the literary race.

It is the great interest of such an episode that, apart from its proportionate place in the unfolding of a personal life, it has a wonderful deal to say to us on the much larger matter of the relation between experience and art. It constitutes an eminent
special

special case, in which the workings of that relation are more or less uncovered ; a case, too, of which one of the most remarkable features is that we are in possession of it almost exclusively by the act of one of the persons concerned. Madame Sand at least, as we see to-day, was eager to leave nothing undone that could make us further acquainted than we were before with one of the liveliest chapters of her personal history. We cannot, doubtless, be sure that her conscious purpose in the production of *Elle et Lui* was to show us the process by which private ecstasies and pains find themselves transmuted in the artist's workshop into promising literary material—any more than we can be certain of her motive for making toward the end of her life earnest and complete arrangements for the ultimate publication of the letters in which the passion is recorded and in which we can remount to the origin of the volume. If *Elle et Lui* had been the inevitable picture, postponed and retouched, of the great adventure of her youth, so the letters show us the crude primary stuff from which the moral detachment of the book was distilled. Were they to be given to the world for the encouragement of the artist-nature—as a contribution to the view that no suffering is great enough, no emotion tragic enough to exclude the hope that such pangs may sooner or later be æsthetically assimilated ? Was the whole proceeding, in intention, a frank plea for the intellectual and in some degree even the commercial profit, for a robust organism, of a store of erotic reminiscence ? Whatever the reasons behind the matter, that is to a certain extent the moral of the strange story.

It may be objected that this moral is qualified to come home to us only when the relation between art and experience really proves a happier one than it may be held to have proved in the combination before us. The element in danger of being most absent from the process is the element of dignity, and its presence,

so far as that may ever at all be hoped for in an appeal from a personal quarrel, is assured only in proportion as the æsthetic event, standing on its own feet, represents a solid gain. It was vain, the objector may say, for Madame Sand to pretend to justify by so slight a performance as *Elle et Lui* that sacrifice of all delicacy which has culminated in this supreme surrender. "If you sacrifice all delicacy," I hear such a critic contend, "show at least that you were right by giving us a masterpiece. The novel in question is no more a masterpiece," I even hear him proceed, "than any other of the loose, liquid, lucid works of its author. By your supposition of a great intention you give much too fine an account on the one hand of a personal habit of laxity and on the other of a literary habit of egotism. Madame Sand, in writing her tale and in publishing her love-letters, obeyed no prompting more complicated than that of exhibiting her personal (in which I include her verbal) facility, and of doing so at the cost of whatever other persons might be concerned; and you are therefore—and you might as well immediately confess it—thrown back, for the element of interest, on the attraction of her general eloquence, the plausibility of her general manner and the great number of her particular confidences. You are thrown back on your mere curiosity—thrown back from any question of service rendered to 'art.'" One might be thrown back, doubtless, still further even than such remarks would represent, if one were not quite prepared with the confession they recommend. It is only because such a figure is interesting—in every manifestation—that the line of its passage is marked for us by traces, suggestions, possible lessons. And to enable us to find them it scarcely need, after all, have aimed so extravagantly high. George Sand lived her remarkable life and drove her perpetual pen, but the illustration that I began by speaking of is for ourselves to gather—if we can.

I remember

I remember hearing many years ago, in Paris, an anecdote for the truth of which I am far from vouching, though it professed to come direct—an anecdote that has recurred to me more than once in turning over the revelations of the *Revue de Paris*, and without the need of the special reminder (in the shape of an allusion to her intimacy with the hero of the story), contained in those letters to Sainte-Beuve which are published in the number of November 15. Prosper Mérimée was said to have related—in a spirit I forbear to qualify—that during a close union with the author of *Lélia* he once opened his eyes, in the raw winter dawn, to see his companion, in a dressing-gown, on her knees before the domestic hearth, a candlestick beside her and a red *madras* round her head, making bravely, with her own hands, the fire that was to enable her to sit down betimes to urgent pen and paper. The story represents him as having felt that the spectacle chilled his ardour and tried his taste; her appearance was unfortunate, her occupation an inconsequence, and her industry a reproof—the result of all of which was a lively irritation and an early rupture. For the firm admirer of Madame Sand's prose the little sketch has a very different value, for it presents her in an attitude which is the very key to the enigma, the answer to most of the questions with which her character confronts us. She rose early because she was pressed to write, and she was pressed to write because she had the greatest instinct of expression ever conferred on a woman; a faculty that put a premium on all passion, on all pain, on all experience and all exposure, on the greatest variety of ties and the smallest reserve about them. The really interesting thing in these posthumous *laidours* is the way the gift, the voice, carries its possessor through them and lifts her, on the whole, above them. It gave her, it may be confessed at the outset and in spite of all magnanimities in the use of it, an unfair

advantage in every connection. So at least we must continue to feel till—for our appreciation of this particular one—we have Alfred de Musset's share of the correspondence. For we shall have it at last, in whatever faded fury or beauty it may still possess—to that we may make up our minds. Let the galled jade wince, it is only a question of time. The greatest of literary quarrels will in short, on the general ground, once more come up—the quarrel beside which all others are mild and arrangeable, the eternal dispute between the public and the private, between curiosity and delicacy.

This discussion is precisely all the sharper because it takes place, for each of us, within as well as without. When we wish to know at all we wish to know everything ; yet there happen to be certain things of which no better description can be given than that they are simply none of our business. "What *is*, then, forsooth, of our business ?" the genuine analyst may always ask ; and he may easily challenge us to produce any rule of general application by which we shall know when to go in and when to back out. "In the first place," he may continue, "half the 'interesting' people in the world have, at one time or another, set themselves to drag us in with all their might ; and what in the world, in such a relation, is the observer, that he should absurdly pretend to be in a greater flutter than the object observed ? The mannikin, in all schools, is at an early stage of study of the human form inexorably superseded by the man. Say that we are to give up the attempt to understand : it might certainly be better so, and there would be a delightful side to the new arrangement. But in the name of common sense don't say that the continuity of life is not to have some equivalent in the continuity of pursuit, the continuity of phenomena in the continuity of notation. There is not a door you can lock here against the critic or the painter

not

not a cry you can raise or a long face you can pull at him that are not absolutely arbitrary. The only thing that makes the observer competent is that he is not afraid nor ashamed ; the only thing that makes him decent—just think !—is that he is not superficial.” All this is very well ; but somehow we all equally feel that there is clean linen and soiled and that life would be intolerable without an element of mystery. M. Emile Zola, at the moment I write, gives to the world his reasons for rejoicing in the publication of the physiological *enquête* of Dr. Toulouse—a marvellous catalogue or handbook of M. Zola’s outward and inward parts, which leaves him not an inch of privacy, so to speak, to stand on, leaves him nothing about himself that is *for* himself, for his friends, his relatives, his intimates, his lovers, for discovery, for emulation, for fond conjecture or flattering deluded envy. It is enough for M. Zola that everything is for the public and that no sacrifice is worth thinking of when it is a question of presenting to the open mouth of that apparently gorged but still gaping monster the smallest spoonful of truth. The truth, to his view, is never either ridiculous or unclean, and the way to a better life lies through telling it, so far as possible, about everything and about every one.

There would probably be no difficulty in agreeing to this if it didn’t seem, on the part of the speaker, the result of a rare confusion between give and take, or between “truth” and information. The true thing that most matters to us is the true thing we have most use for, and there are surely many occasions on which the truest thing of all is the necessity of the mind—its simple necessity of feeling. Whether it feels in order to learn or learns in order to feel, the event is the same : the side on which it shall most feel will be the side to which it will most incline. If it feels more about a Zola functionally undeciphered,
it

it will be governed more by that particular truth than by the truth about his digestive idiosyncrasies, or even about his "olfactive perceptions" and his "arithomania or impulse to count." An affirmation of our "mere taste" may very supposably be our individual contribution to the general clearing-up. Nothing, often, is less superficial than to skip or more constructive (for living and feeling at all) than to choose. If we are aware that in the same way as about a Zola undeciphered we should have felt more about a George Sand unexposed, the true thing we have gained becomes a poor substitute for the one we have lost ; and I scarce know what difference it makes that the view of the elder novelist appears, in this matter, quite to march with that of the younger. I hasten to add that as to being, of course, asked why in the world, with such a leaning, we have given time either to M. Zola's physician or to De Musset's correspondent, that is only another illustration of the bewildering state of the subject.

When we meet on the broad highway the rueful denuded figure we need some presence of mind to decide whether to cut it dead or to lead it gently home, and meanwhile the fatal complication easily occurs. We have *seen*, in a flash of our own wit, and mystery has fled with a shriek. These encounters are indeed accidents which may at any time take place, and the general guarantee, in a noisy world, lies, I judge, not so much in any hope of really averting them as in a regular organisation of the combat. The painter and the painted have duly and equally to understand that they carry their life in their hands. There are secrets for privacy and silence ; let them only be cultivated on the part of the hunted creature with even half the method with which the love of sport—or call it the historic sense—is cultivated on the part of the investigator. They have been left too much to
the

the natural, the instinctive man ; but they will be twice as effective after it begins to be observed that they may take their place among the triumphs of civilisation. Then at last the game will be fair and the two forces face to face ; it will be "pull devil, pull tailor," and the hardest pull will doubtless constitute the happiest result. Then the cunning of the inquirer, envenomed with resistance, will exceed in subtlety and ferocity anything we to-day conceive, and the pale forewarned victim, with every track covered, every paper burnt and every letter unanswered, will, in the tower of art, the invulnerable granite, stand, without a sally, the siege of all the years.

II

It was not in the tower of art that Madame Sand ever shut herself up ; but I come back to a point already made in saying that it is, in a manner, in the citadel of style that, in spite of all rash *sorties*, she continues to hold out. The outline of the complicated story that was to cause so much ink to flow gives, even with the omission of a hundred features, a direct measure of the strain to which her astonishing faculty was exposed. In the summer of 1833, as a woman of nearly thirty, she encountered Alfred de Musset, who was six years her junior. In spite of their youth they were already somewhat bowed by the weight of a troubled past. Musset, at twenty-three, had that of his confirmed libertinism—so Madame Arvède Barine, who has had access to materials, tells us in the admirable short biography of the poet contributed to the rather markedly unequal but very interesting series of Hachette's *Grands Ecrivains Français*. Madame Sand had a husband, a son and a daughter, and the impress of that succession of lovers—Jules Sandeau had been one, Prosper Mérimée

Mérimée another—to which she so freely alludes in the letters to Sainte-Beuve, a friend more disinterested than these and qualified to give much counsel in exchange for much confidence. It cannot be said that the situation of either of our young persons was of good omen for a happy relation; but they appear to have burnt their ships with much promptitude and a great blaze, and in the December of that year they started together for Italy. The following month saw them settled, on a frail basis, in Venice, where Madame Sand remained till late in the summer of 1834 and where she wrote, in part, *Jacques* and the *Lettres d'un Voyageur*, as well as *André* and *Leone-Leoni*, and gathered the impressions to be embodied later in half-a-dozen stories with Italian titles—notably in the delightful *Consuelo*. The journey, the Italian climate, the Venetian winter at first agreed with neither of the friends; they were both taken ill—the young man very gravely—and after a stay of three months De Musset returned, alone and much ravaged, to Paris.

In the meantime a great deal had happened, for their union had been stormy and their security small. Madame Sand had nursed her companion in illness (a matter-of-course office, it must be owned) and her companion had railed at his nurse in health. A young doctor, called in, had become a close friend of both parties, but more particularly a close friend of Madame Sand, and it was to his tender care that, on withdrawing, De Musset solemnly committed the lady. She lived with Pietro Pagello—the transition is startling—for the rest of her stay, and on her journey back to France he was no inconsiderable part of her luggage. He was simple, robust and kind—not a man of genius. He remained, however, but a short time in Paris. In the autumn of 1834 he returned to Italy, to live on till our own day, but never again, so far as we know, to meet his illustrious mistress. Her intercourse
with

with De Musset was, in all its intensity—one may almost say its ferocity—promptly renewed, and was sustained in this key for several months more. The effect of this strange and tormented passion on the mere student of its records is simply to make him ask himself what on earth is the matter with the subjects of it. Nothing is more easy than to say, as I have intimated, that it has no need of records and no need of students; but this leaves out of account the thick medium of genius in which it was foredoomed to disport itself. It was self-registering, as the phrase is, for the genius on both sides happened to be the genius of eloquence. It is all rapture and all rage and all literature. The *Lettres d'un Voyageur* spring from the thick of the fight; *La Confession d'un Enfant du Siècle* and *Les Nuits* are immediate echoes of the concert. The lovers are naked in the market-place and perform for the benefit of humanity. The matter with them, to the perception of the stupefied spectator, is that they entertained for each other every feeling in life but the feeling of respect. What the absence of that article may do for the passion of hate is apparently nothing to what it may do for the passion of love.

By our unhappy pair, at any rate, the luxury in question—the little luxury of plainer folk—was not to be purchased, and in the comedy of their despair and the tragedy of their recovery nothing is more striking than their convulsive effort either to reach up to it or to do without it. They would have given for it all else they possessed, but they only meet in their struggle the inexorable *never*. They strain and pant and gasp, they beat the air in vain for the cup of cold water of their hell. They missed it in a way for which none of their superiorities could make up. Their great affliction was that each found in the life of the other an armoury of weapons to wound. Young as they were, young as Musset was in particular, they appeared to have afforded each other in that direction

direction the most extraordinary facilities ; and nothing in the matter of the mutual consideration that failed them is more sad and strange than that even in later years, when their rage, very quickly, had cooled, they never arrived at simple silence. For Madame Sand, in her so much longer life, there was no hush, no letting alone ; though it would be difficult indeed to exaggerate the depth of relative indifference from which, a few years after Musset's death, such a production as *Elle et Lui* could spring. Of course there had been floods of tenderness, of forgiveness ; but those, for all their beauty of expression, are quite another matter. It is just the fact of our sense of the ugliness of so much of the episode that makes a wonder and a force of the fine style, all round, in which it is presented to us. This force, in its turn, is a sort of clue to guide—or perhaps rather a sign to stay—our feet in paths after all not the most edifying. It gives a degree of importance to the somewhat squalid and the somewhat ridiculous story, and, for the old George-Sandist at least, lends a positive spell to the smeared and yellowed paper, the blotted and faded ink. In this twilight of association we seem to find a reply to our own challenge and to be able to tell ourselves why we meddle with such old, dead squabbles and waste our time with such grimacing ghosts. If we were superior to the weakness, moreover, how should we make our point (which we must really make at any cost) about the value of this vivid proof that a great talent is the best guarantee—that it may really carry off almost anything ?

The rather sorry ghost that beckons us on furthest is the rare personality of Madame Sand. Under its influence—or that of old memories from which it is indistinguishable—we pick our steps among the *laideurs* aforesaid : the misery, the levity, the brevity of it all, the greatest ugliness, in particular, that this life shows us, the way the devotions and passions that we see heaven and earth
called

called to witness are over before we can turn round. It may be said that, for what it was, the intercourse of these unfortunates surely lasted long enough ; but the answer to that is that if it had only lasted longer it wouldn't have been what it was. It was not only preceded and followed by intimacies, on one side and the other, as unrestricted, but it was mixed up with them in a manner that would seem to us dreadful if it didn't, still more, seem to us droll ; or rather perhaps if it didn't refuse altogether to come home to us with the crudity of contemporary things. It is antediluvian history, a queer, vanished world—another Venice, another Paris, an inextricable, inconceivable Nohant. This relegates it to an order agreeable somehow to the imagination of the fond quinquagenarian, the reader with a fund of reminiscence. The vanished world, the old Venice, the old Paris are a bribe to his judgment ; he has even a glance of complacency for the lady's liberal *foyer*. Liszt, one lovely year at Nohant, "jouait du piano au rez-de-chaussée, et les rossignols, ivres de musique et de soleil, s'égosillaient avec rage sur les lilas environnants." The beautiful manner confounds itself with the conditions in which it was exercised, the large liberty and variety overflow into admirable prose, and the whole thing makes a charming faded medium in which Chopin gives a hand to Consuelo and the small Fadette has her elbows on the table of Flaubert.

There is a terrible letter of the autumn of 1834, in which Madame Sand has recourse to Alfred Tattet in a dispute with the bewildered Pagello—a very disagreeable matter, hinging on a question of money. "A Venise il comprenait," she somewhere says ; "à Paris il ne comprend plus." It was a proof of remarkable intelligence that he did understand in Venice, where he had become a lover in the presence and with the exalted approbation of an immediate predecessor—an alternate representative of the
part,

part, whose turn had now, on the removal to Paris, come round again and in whose resumption of office it was looked to him to concur. This attachment—to Pagello—had lasted but a few months; yet already it was the prey of disagreement and change, and its sun appears to have set in no very graceful fashion. We are not here, in truth, among very graceful things, in spite of superhuman attitudes and great romantic flights. As to these forced notes, Madame Arvède Barine judiciously says that the picture of them contained in the letters to which she had had access, and some of which are before us, “presents an example extraordinary and unique of what the romantic spirit could do with beings who had become its prey.” She adds that she regards the records in question, “in which we follow step by step the ravages of the monster,” as “one of the most precious psychological documents of the first half of the century.” That puts the story on its true footing, though we may regret that it should not divide these documentary honours more equally with some other story in which the monster has not quite so much the best of it. But it is the misfortune of the comparatively short and simple annals of conduct and character that they should ever seem to us, somehow, to cut less deep. Scarce—to quote again his best biographer—had Musset, at Venice, begun to recover from his illness than the two lovers were seized afresh by *le vertige du sublime et de l'impossible*. “Ils imaginèrent les déviations de sentiment les plus bizarres, et leur intérieur fut le théâtre de scènes qui égalaient en étrangeté les fantaisies les plus audacieuses de la littérature contemporaine;” that is of the literature of their own day. The register of virtue contains no such lively items—save indeed in so far as these contortions and convulsions were a conscious tribute to virtue.

Ten weeks after Musset has left her in Venice Madame Sand writes

writes to him in Paris: "God keep you, my friend, in your present disposition of heart and mind. Love is a temple built by the lover to an object more or less worthy of his worship, and what is grand in the thing is not so much the god as the altar. Why should you be afraid of the risk?"—of a new mistress, she means. There would seem to be reason enough why he should have been afraid; but nothing is more characteristic than her eagerness to push him into the arms of another woman—more characteristic either of her whole philosophy of these matters or of their tremendous, though somewhat conflicting, effort to be good. She is to be good by showing herself so superior to jealousy as to stir up in him a new appetite for a new object, and he is to be so by satisfying it to the full. It appears not to occur to any one that in such an arrangement his own virtue is rather sacrificed. Or is it indeed because he has scruples—or even a sense of humour—that she insists with such ingenuity and such eloquence? "Let the idol stand long or let it soon break, you will in either case have built a beautiful shrine. Your soul will have lived in it, have filled it with divine incense, and a soul like yours must produce great works. The god will change perhaps; the temple will last as long as yourself." "Perhaps," under the circumstances, was charming. The letter goes on with the ample flow that was always at the author's command—an ease of suggestion and generosity, of beautiful melancholy acceptance, in which we foresee, on her own horizon, the dawn of new suns. Her simplifications are delightful—they remained so to the end; her touch is a wondrous sleight-of-hand. The whole of this letter, in short, is a splendid utterance and a masterpiece of the particular sympathy which consists of wishing another to feel as you feel yourself. To feel as Madame Sand felt, however, one had to be, like Madame Sand, a man; which poor Musset was far from

from being. This, we surmise, was the case with most of her lovers, and the verity that makes the idea of her *liaison* with Mérimée, who *was* one, sound almost like a union against nature. She repeats to her correspondent, on grounds admirably stated, the injunction that he is to give himself up, to let himself go, to take his chance. That he took it we all know—he followed her advice only too well. It is indeed not long before his manner of doing so draws from her a cry of distress. “Ta conduite est déplorable, impossible. Mon Dieu, à quelle vie vais-je te laisser ? l’ivresse, le vin, les filles, et encore et toujours !” But apprehensions were now too late ; they would have been too late at the very earliest stage of this celebrated connection.

III

The great difficulty was that, though they were sublime, the couple were not serious. But, on the other hand, if, on a lady’s part, in such a relation, the want of sincerity or of constancy is a grave reproach, the matter is a good deal modified when the lady, as I have mentioned, happens to be—I won’t go so far exactly as to say a gentleman. That George Sand just fell short of this character was the greatest difficulty of all ; because if a woman, in a love-affair, may be—for all she is to gain or to lose—what she likes, there is only one thing that, to carry it off with any degree of credit, a man may be. Madame Sand forgot this on the day she published *Elle et Lui* ; she forgot it again, more gravely, when she bequeathed to the great snickering public these present shreds and relics of unutterably delicate things. The aberration connects itself with the strange lapses of still other occasions—notably with the extraordinary absence of scruples with which, in the delightful

Histoire

Histoire de ma Vie, she gives away, as we say, the character of her remarkable mother. The picture is admirable for vividness, for touch; it would be perfect from any hand not a daughter's, and we ask ourselves wonderingly how, through all the years, to make her capable of it, a long perversion must have worked and the filial fibre—or rather the general flower of sensibility—have been battered. Not this particular anomaly, however, but some others certainly, clear up more or less in the light of the reflection that as, just after her death, a very perceptive person who had known her well put it to the author of these remarks, she was a woman quite by accident. Her immense plausibility was almost the only sign of her sex. She needed always to prove that she had been in the right; as how indeed could a person fail to, who, thanks to the special equipment I have named, might prove it so easily? It is not too much to say of her gift of expression—and I have already in effect said it—that, from beginning to end, it floated her over the real as a high tide floats a ship over the bar. She was never left awkwardly straddling on the sandbank of fact.

For the rest, at any rate, with her free experience and her free use of it, her literary style, her love of ideas and questions, of science and philosophy, her *camaraderie*, her boundless tolerance, her intellectual patience, her personal good-humour and perpetual tobacco (she smoked long before women at large felt the cruel obligation), with all these things and many I don't mention, she had morally more of the notes of the other sex than of her own. She had above all the mark that, to speak at this time of day with a freedom for which her action in the matter of publicity gives us warrant, the history of her personal passions reads singularly like a chronicle of the ravages of some male celebrity. Her relations with men closely resembled those relations with women that, from the age of Pericles or that of Petrarch, have been complacently commemorated

commemorated as stages in the unfolding of the great statesman and the great poet. It is very much the same large list, the same story of free appropriation and consumption. She appeared in short to have lived through a succession of such ties exactly in the manner of a Goethe, a Byron or a Napoleon ; and if millions of women, of course, of every condition, had had more lovers, it was probable that no woman, independently so occupied and so diligent, had ever had, as might be said, more unions. Her fashion was quite her own of extracting from this sort of experience all that it had to give her, and being withal only the more just and bright and true, the more sane and superior, improved and improving. She strikes us, in the benignity of such an intercourse, as even more than maternal : not so much the mere fond mother as the supersensuous grandmother of the wonderful affair. Is not that practically the character in which Thérèse Jacques studies to present herself to Laurent de Fauvel ? the light in which *Lucrezia Floriani* (a memento of a friendship for Chopin, for Liszt) shows the heroine as affected toward Prince Karol and his friend ? George Sand is too inveterately moral, too preoccupied with that need to do good which is often, in art, the enemy of doing well ; but in all her work the story-part, as children call it, has the freshness and good faith of a monastic legend. It is just possible indeed that the moral idea was the real mainspring of her course—I mean a sense of the duty of avenging on the unscrupulous race of men their immemorial selfish success with the plastic race of women. Did she wish above all to turn the tables—to show how the sex that had always ground the other in the intellectual mill was on occasion capable of being ground ?

However this may be, nothing is more striking than the impunity with which she gave herself to conditions that are usually held to denote or to involve a state of demoralisation. This
impunity

impunity (to speak only of consequences or features that concern us) was not, I admit, complete, but it was sufficiently so to warrant us in saying that no one was ever less demoralised. She presents a case prodigiously discouraging to the usual view—the view that there is no surrender to “unconsecrated” passion that we escape paying for in one way or another. It is, frankly, difficult to see where this eminent woman conspicuously paid. She positively got off from paying—and in a cloud of fluency and dignity, benevolence, intelligence. She sacrificed, it is true, a handful of minor coin—met the loss by failing, in her picture of life, wholly to grasp certain shades and certain differences. What she paid was just this loss of her touch for them. That is one of the reasons, doubtless, why to-day the picture in question has perceptibly faded—why there are persons who would perhaps even go so far as to say that it has really a comic side. She doesn’t know, according to such persons, her right hand from her left, the crooked from the straight and the clean from the unclean: it was a sense she lacked or a tact she had rubbed off, and her great work is, by this fatal twist, quite as lopsided a monument as the leaning tower of Pisa. Some readers may charge her with a graver confusion still—the incapacity to distinguish between fiction and fact, the truth straight from the well and the truth curling in steam from the kettle and preparing the comfortable tea. There is no word oftener on her pen, they will remind us, than the verb to “arrange.” She arranged constantly, she arranged beautifully; but from this point of view—that of suspicion—she always proved too much. Turned over in the light of it the story of *Elle et Lui*, for instance, is an attempt to prove that the mistress of Laurent de Fauvel was a regular prodigy of virtue. What is there not, the intemperate admirer may be challenged to tell us, an attempt to prove in *L’Histoire de ma Vie*?

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Vie ?—a work from which we gather every delightful impression but the impression of an impeccable veracity.

These reservations may, however, all be sufficiently just without affecting our author's peculiar air of having eaten her cake and had it, been equally initiated in directions the most opposed. Of how much cake she partook the letters to Musset and Sainte-Beuve well show us, and yet they fall in at the same time, on other sides, with all that was noble in her mind, all that is beautiful in the books just mentioned and in the six volumes of the general *Correspondance : 1812-1876*, out of which Madame Sand comes so immensely to her advantage. She had, as liberty, all the adventures of which the dots are so put on the i's by the documents lately published, and then she had, as law, as honour and serenity, all her fine reflections on them and all her splendid, busy, literary use of them. Nothing perhaps gives more relief to her masculine stamp than the rare art and success with which she cultivated an equilibrium. She made, from beginning to end, a masterly study of composure, absolutely refusing to be upset, closing her door at last against the very approach of irritation and surprise. She had arrived at her quiet, elastic synthesis—a good-humour, an indulgence that were an armour of proof. The great felicity of all this was that it was neither indifference nor renunciation, but on the contrary an intense partaking ; imagination, affection, sympathy and life, the way she had found for herself of living most and living longest. However well it all agreed with her happiness and her manners, it agreed still better with her style, as to which we come back with her to the sense that this was really her *point d'appui* or sustaining force. Most people have to say, especially about themselves, only what they can ; but she said—and we nowhere see it better than in the letters to Musset—everything in life that she wanted. We can well imagine the
effect

effect of that consciousness on the nerves of this particular correspondent, his own poor gift of occasional song (to be so early spent) reduced to nothing by so unequalled a command of the last word. We feel it, I hasten to add, this last word, in all her letters: the occasion, no matter which, gathers it from her as the breeze gathers the scent from the garden. It is always the last word of sympathy and sense, and we meet it on every page of the voluminous *Correspondance*. These pages are not so "clever" as those, in the same order, of some other famous hands—the writer always denied, justly enough, that she had either wit or drollery—and they are not a product of high spirits or of a marked avidity for gossip. But they have admirable ease, breadth and generosity; they are the clear, quiet overflow of a very full cup. They speak above all for the author's great gift, her eye for the inward drama. Her hand is always on the fiddle-string, her ear is always at the heart. It was in the soul, in a word, that she saw the play begin, and to the soul that, after whatever outward flourishes, she saw it confidently come back. She herself lived with all her perceptions and in all her chambers—not merely in the showroom of the shop. This brings us once more to the question of the instrument and the tone, and to our idea that the tone, when you are so lucky as to possess it, may be of itself a solution.

By a solution I mean a secret for saving not only your reputation but your life—that of your spirit; an antidote to dangers which the unendowed can hope to escape by no process less uncomfortable or less inglorious than that of prudence and precautions. The unendowed must go round about; the others may go straight through the wood. Their weaknesses, those of the others, shall be as well redeemed as their books shall be well preserved; it may almost indeed be said that they are made wise in spite of themselves. If you have never, in all your days, *had a*

weakness, you can be, after all, no more, at the very most, than large and cheerful and imperturbable. All these things Madame Sand managed to be on just the terms she had found, as we see, most convenient. So much, I repeat, does there appear to be in a tone. But if the perfect possession of one made her, as it well might, an optimist, the action of it is perhaps more consistently happy in her letters and her personal records than in her "creative" work. Her novels to-day have turned rather pale and faint, as if the image projected—not intense, not absolutely concrete—failed to reach completely the mind's eye. And the odd point is that the wonderful charm of expression is not really a remedy for this lack of intensity, but rather an aggravation of it through a sort of suffusion of the whole thing by the voice and speech of the author. These things set the subject, whatever it be, afloat in the upper air, where it takes a happy bath of brightness and vagueness or swims like a soap-bubble kept up by blowing. This is no drawback when she is on the ground of her own life, to which she is tied, in truth, by a certain number of tangible threads; but to embark on one of her confessed fictions is to have—after all that has come and gone, in our time, in the trick of persuasion—a little too much the feeling of going up in a balloon. We are borne by a fresh, cool current, and the car delightfully dangles; but as we peep over the sides we see things—as we usually know them—at a dreadful drop beneath. Or perhaps a better way to express the sensation is to say what I have just been struck with in the re-perusal of *Elle et Lui*; namely that this book, like others by the same hand, affects the reader—and the impression is of the oddest—not as a first but as a second echo or edition of the immediate real, or in other words of the subject. The tale may in this particular be taken as typical of the author's manner; beautifully told, but told, as if on a last remove from the facts, by
some

some one repeating what he has read or what he has had from another and thereby inevitably becoming more general and superficial, missing or forgetting the "hard" parts and slurring them over and making them up. Of everything but feelings the presentation is dim. We recognise that we shall never know the original narrator and that Madame Sand is the only one we can deal with. But we sigh perhaps as we reflect that we may never confront her with her own informant.

To that, however, we must resign ourselves; for I remember in time that the volume from which I take occasion to speak with this levity is the work that I began by pronouncing a precious illustration. With the aid of the disclosures of the *Revue de Paris* it was, as I hinted, to show us that no mistakes and no pains are too great to be, in the air of art, triumphantly convertible. Has it really performed this function? I thumb again my copy of the limp little novel and wonder what, alas! I shall reply. The case is extreme, for it was the case of a suggestive experience particularly dire, and the literary flower that has bloomed upon it is not quite the full-blown rose. "Oeuvre de rancune" Arvède Barine pronounces it, and if we take it as that we admit that the artist's distinctness from her material was not ideally complete. Shall I not better the question by saying that it strikes me less as a work of rancour than—in a peculiar degree—as a work of egotism? It becomes in that light, at any rate, a sufficiently happy affirmation of the author's infallible form. This form was never a more successful vehicle for the conveyance of sweet reasonableness. It is all superlatively calm and clear; there never was a kinder, balmier last word. Whatever the measure of justice of the particular picture, moreover, the picture has only to be put beside the recent documents, the "study," as I may call them, to illustrate
the

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the general phenomenon. Even if *Elle et Lui* is not the full-blown rose, we have enough here to place in due relief an irrepressible tendency to bloom. In fact I seem already to discern that tendency in the very midst of the storm; the "tone" in the letters too has its own way and performs on its own account—which is but another manner of saying that the literary instinct, in the worst shipwreck, is never out of its depth. Madame Sand could be drowned but in an ocean of ink. Is that a sufficient account of what I have called the laying bare of the relation between experience and art? With the two elements, the life and the genius, face to face—the smutches and quarrels at one end of the chain, and the high luminosity at the other—does some essential link still appear to be missing? How do the graceless facts, after all, confound themselves with the beautiful spirit? They do so, incontestably, before our eyes, and the mystification remains. We try to trace the process, but before we break down we had better perhaps hasten to grant that—so far at least as George Sand is concerned—some of its steps are impenetrable secrets of the grand manner.

My Note-Book in the Weald

By M^{énie} Muriel Dowie

THE title of these sketches has reference to many wanderings, afoot, driving, but mainly on horseback, which I have enjoyed from time to time in the wealds of Surrey and Sussex. If you stand on Blackdown or on Witley Hill and look out over the folds and oak-forests spread below you to the very verge of the downs, you see the country where Stephen Yesser still carves the haunch of mutton—as I believe, inimitably : and the country where the landlord's wedding, at which I assisted, is still remembered as one of the merriest days in Puddingfold.

I—Stephen Yesser

TO see him standing by the sideboard in his loose-fitting dress-suit, his eye upon the table in the window no less than on the table by the fire and the table in the centre, his ear hanging upon the tinkle of the bell from the commercial room and the private sitting-room upstairs, where a party was dining, his mind upon the joint delicately furrowed by his unerring carver—to see him so, you might have mistaken him for an ordinary waiter. But even to call him a waiter of unusual ability would have been

to

to show yourself obtuse. This large, fair fat man with the shaven face, double chin, even brick colour and eye of oyster blue, had a character, and it came out when I happened to be the only person in the coffee-room that evening.

"Nice little dog, Miss?" he began, insinuatively stroking my self-centred, unresponsive terrier—"I'm very fond of dogs myself; bulls, I mostly fancy, tho' I 'ave kep' all sorts one way an' another." His voice had the low, furtive quality that distinguishes the sporting class in the South country, the class, in fact, that "'as kep' all sorts." If his clothes had fitted more tightly upon his big frame, you would have suspected him of having been a prize fighter.

I made an encouraging reply.

"If you was once to 'ave one you'd never take to no other sort." There was a gentle defiance in his round, even voice, a voice that had the training of an ostler with a dash of a gentleman's servant in it. Sometimes his lips moved as though turning a straw about in his mouth; his face in repose had the eyebrows raised, the lines from nostril to lip-corner deeply marked, the mouth pulled down but with no effect of sneering in its sneer; rather the acrid cheerfulness of a man not too successful, but still nowise to be accounted a failure, a man acquainted with the compensations of life. "I shouldn't recommend the brindle myself; now a nice pure w'ite with a butterfly nose would be as neat a pet as any lady could wish to have. I've not long parted with my Snowdrop; won a rare lot o' prizes with 'er, till a gentleman—well, you might know him Miss, Captain Soames of the Cawbineers? 'E awffered me twenty-two pound for 'er an' I let 'er go." Melancholy triumphed in the waiter's broad face for a moment; his sad eye roved mechanically to my plate. "Cut you a little bit more off the 'aunch, Miss? One of 'er puppies took second at the Palace and would
'ave

'ave 'ad first, only the judge 'e 'ad a fancy for another pound or so of weight."

I threw in the appropriate remark.

"There's Mrs. Dempsey of Colmanhatch—you might 'ave noticed the 'ouse as you come along, Miss, stands back a bit from the road in a s'rubby—she wanted one of Snowdrop's puppies, an' wouldn't have stopped at money neither, but I promised the last to Mr. Hutton of the 'George.'"

I foresaw tears on the part of the waiter if we didn't speedily abandon the records of the Snowdrop family. I interposed with a red herring.

"Yes, Miss, I daresay they are, but for my part I'd sooner 'ave a nice sharp fox-terrier after game than any of them wiry-'aired ones. Now, one Sunday morning I was up early walkin' round by Burley Rough—in the summer I often takes a early turn that way just to see the rabbits. Well, this little fox-terrier I 'ad with me" (the waiter has an elusive narrative habit, and though with intelligence he can be followed, use is really of most assistance in gleaning his facts), "she started a rabbit in a bit of furze an' off after it before I could holler." I am not sure if Stephen really wished me to believe that he was at all likely to have hollered. "She run it well out of sight, I never see a dog more nimbler on her legs than what she was, an' me after her. All at wunst, I 'eard 'er sing out; that fetched me on the track, and if you'll believe, she was in the mouth of a burrer with her forefoot in a steel trap an' 'ad the rabbit in 'er mouth, 'an never left 'old of it. The rabbit bein' lighter like 'ad run clean over the trap an' she'd just come up in time to snap it from be'ine."

I had two more courses to eat through and I perceived that the waiter was likely to draw heavily upon my appreciation. I economised with the caution and the dexterity that come only of long practice,

practice, at the same time I offered a perfectly adequate comment.

"They pay men eighteen shillings a week to keep the rabbits down and yet if you was to ketch one in a snare an' be found out you'd 'ave six weeks."

I tried to see myself, on the waiter's suggestion, in this predicament, and admitted in the full glow of sympathy that it did seem hard.

"An' it *is* 'ard," said the waiter with conviction. "You can't get a full-grown rabbit not under eighteenpence in the town, an' I'd sooner ketch one myself"—he dropped his voice to a note of rapture—"I think they eat sweeter."

It was impossible not to respond to the unquenchable human nature in the waiter's eye. After all, they weren't my rabbits. A venal warmth chequered the restraint of my smile. As the irrigator directs the waterflow by a slight turn of his foot, I directed, just so quietly, the conversation.

"Oh there is, Miss, a deal of poaching, to be sure. You see, in the winter-time, a man may be out of work and *he* knows where 'is two-and-nine is waitin' for him when 'e's wearin' 'is fur-lined overcoat, as the sayin' goes. Yes, Miss; two-an'-nine's what they give for a hare—so I've been told." Some day we may have an actor capable of this delicate manipulation of the pause—I know of none just now. "An' then there's them that does it for the love of sport."

I wanted some cheese, but I caught sight of the glow in the oyster-eyes and I prayed that nothing might divert the waiter to a sense of his duties at that moment. There is poetry in every soul, we know; by long study I have learned to detect sometimes the moment of the lighting of its fires. There was that in the waiter's kiln-brick face which a keen eye could recognise. So
looks

looks the man who tells you of the one "woman in the world," so looks the poet who describes his last sonnet, so look the faces of them that dream of heart's desire.

"You see there's a deal of preservin' done round here, and when a labourin' man has say six or seven of a family and takes 'is nine shillin' a week, as some of 'em do in winter, an' 'as coal to find and boots to keep on the children, well, 'e 'as to git it somewhere, 'asn't he, Miss? You can't wonder that some of 'em steps out of a night an' nooses a brace of pheasants." I maintained a steady but an unexaggerated air of sympathy; there was no use in the waiter putting it off, we had heard the utilitarian side, what about "them as does it for the love o' sport?" But I was much too wary to ask! "An' you see, Miss, since this frozen meat come in, why eighteenpence 'll buy a man 'is leg of lamb at the stall. As for the poorer parts, they pretty near give it away of a Saturday night, an' for two shillin' he'll get what'll keep 'is family in meat for a week."

Very well, if I had to wait, I could wait.

"Every bit as good, Miss," in answer to my query. "Of course, it wants a knack in cookin', it don't want to be put in no fierce oven; you want to 'ang it in the kitchen and thor it out gradual, an' it'll make twice its size; then, if it's nicely basted, you won't want to eat no sweeter bit of meat."

"Then they never eat the pheasants themselves?" I remarked, with the air of one whose mind is on the central problem. "I don't wonder, for I think a pheasant is nothing to rave about. I'd as soon have a chicken."

"If you'd ever tried one stuffed with chopped celery, then closed up so the water don't get to it in a bit of nice paste, and boiled for about two hours, Miss," said the waiter, in tender remonstrance, "you'd never say that again." I was on the point
of

of offering never to say it again, when the waiter's eyes again sought the furthest gas-burner at the end of the room, and an air of reverie and fervour again gleamed in his oyster-eye. "Wonderful silly birds pheasants are, Miss. You can go out with a line in your pocket, an' a fish 'ook on the end of it, an' bait it with a raisin, and 'ang it over the fence——"

"Do pheasants like raisins?" I was idiot enough to interject; but fortunately poetry and prudence may not burn in the same brain at the same time, and the waiter had abandoned himself to poetry.

"Oh, marvellous fond of raisins, pheasants are. Of course, it wants artful doin'; the line wants to be 'ung *just so*, and a raisin or two dropped where he's likely to run, an' ten to one 'e'll make a peck at it—an' the best of it is w'en 'e's got it the bird can't 'oller."

I suppressed a weak desire to say it was shockingly cruel. Mentally, I surveyed myself with cold dislike as I heard myself remark that it must be very exciting work.

"I should say it was, Miss. These old poachers 'as some fine stories to tell of it. Some likes a pea at the end of a few strands of horse-hair. 'Ow is it done? Oh, you want to dror it long from the horse's tail, an' then you twist it fine together an' runs it through the pea and makes a knot. Some prefers a 'ook in the pea. Then, you see, the bird just swallows it, and there he is. With either the raisin *hor* the pea it wants to be 'ung so's the bird, when he pecks an' takes it, 'as 'is feet *just awf* the ground. It's wonderful how quick they are to see it, too. Of course, it has to be a fine night, but I don't care for too much moon myself." The waiter was unaware of this change of pronoun. "But it's wonderfully taking sport. Well," with a deprecatory smile, which displayed an irreproachable set of false teeth, "I've 'ad as many as three in one evening."

My

My morality being once in abeyance I did not stick at a hearty encomium.

"Seen a bit of all sorts of life, I 'ave. Well, I was in Tom Hotchkiss's racing stables till I got too heavy, but I've always been a great one for sports or anything of that. Fine sideboardful o' cups I've got wot I've won running; I 'ad a butter cooler, silver-plated, only last year for the Married Men's 'Undred Yard Race." Melancholy again descended like a mist upon the waiter's cheerful countenance.

I feared he might have been reflecting on his growing handicap, technical or physical, and I deployed a reflection upon the variety of his experiences. He smiled again, and spoke softly of his lost youth.

"Well, I began by bein' apprentice' to a butcher, an' I stay' at that eighteen months. Then one morning where I took the meat down, the gardener stop' and ask me if I'd care to come *hindoors*"—some inner light illuminated this phrase for me. It did not mean would he step into the kitchen; it meant would he take indoor service—"because 'is master wanted a page-boy, an' I jumped at this. Oh, I thought it grand—that was with Mr. Beatup at the 'Bull,' and I've been mostly in hotel service ever since." He paused; he smiled thoughtfully, evidently a new idea had struck him. "It seems funny to say it," he began almost shamefacedly, "but there's one thing I 'aven't done, and that's drove a fly!" His air of triumph was so naïf and so marked that I felt it to be a point worth elucidating. I hunted for the proper setting of the question; I was anxious not to make a blunder.

"What, have you ever had a chance to?" I said at last, and I thought—indeed, still think—this very neat.

"Should 'ave 'ad," said the waiter, quite respectfully but enjoying

ing the joke none the less, "for my father was a cab-proprietor down in Weymouth, since ever I remember. 'Ad twenty-three or twenty-four lots going time he died, landaws and privek brooms and closed-and-opens. 'E was a very curious man my father, 'e 'ad a great belief in luck. Sometimes 'e would buy a horse for luck, other times 'e'd think one of 'is carriages brought him bad luck. He always used to go about with a carriage dog, one o' them spotted—well, Darmations some calls 'em; oh, she was a beautiful creature—an' knowin'! Well, there wasn't anything she wouldn't do. Why, she'd go up to one of the other horses on the rank, as it might be, what wasn't my father's, you see, Miss, an' she'd ackshly pull the clover out of 'is nose-bag and kerry it to one of my father's own 'orses." I blinked, but got it down. "Ho, wonderful knowin' she was! There was a lady there awffered my father eighteen sov'rins for her, but 'e wouldn't sell. 'No,' 'e said, 'if I sell my dog, I sell my luck,' 'e said, 'besides, she wouldn't stay with you, she'd always be back in the yard,' 'e said. Often enough she ask' 'im, but 'e always said the same about 'is luck. At last she came and said she was goin' away to live in Brighton, and she awffer' him £20," the waiter's figures always came out with a suspicious glibness—"so father 'e was beat, but 'e says 'so sure as my name's Stephen Yesser'—that was my father's name an' 'e give me the same—'my luck's sold,' 'e says! An' it wasn't a twelvemonth later that 'e was drivin' home one night with a horse he'd bought in London some time before, an' it bolted at the scroop of a tramway, turn' the corner short and come down pitchin' father out and his 'ead was all cut to pieces—killed 'im on the spot. He was took up in a bag. Seems he might have fell free if his coat hadn't 'ave caught in the lamp-iron." My mind had filled suddenly with a lurid picture of Mr. Yesser, senior,

being

being "took up in a bag," but the waiter's point was not lost upon me for all that. "But it was a funny thing after what he'd said when 'e come to part with the Darmation, wasn't it, Miss?" he said. "Yes, I know, *I* know," this to a subordinate who appeared at the door, "it's the hupstairs parlour bell, so you'll escuse me, Miss; I don't mind to keep them waitin' a minute, they ain't none of our lot—business gentlemen from London."

II—The Landlord's Wedding

"CAN Mrs. Sollop have the landau this afternoon? She wishes to drive out to Cray's Wood; have you a horse disengaged about three?"

I recognised the old Rector's voice at once; he spoke his inquiry like a piece of ritual—or is it rubric?—in the tone reserved for celebrations. The reply was inaudible, but I was quite sure that Mrs. Sollop couldn't have the landau: I had been in the inn-yard that morning, and I knew that the landau had other fish to fry, so to speak. Words would fail to depict the ardour with which Tom and Frank, the two ostlers, had been assailing the old landau, leathers in hand and scarlet braces flying, from an early hour; they had got my wheel jack in use, and pail after pail of water went through the spokes. They did not apologise for borrowing the wheel jack, and I recognised with them that the occasion lifted us all above considerations of common formulæ. Within the stable could be seen the patient heads of "the Teamster" and "Bay Bob" (provisionally referred to as "the pair") dipping reflectively between the pillar-chains. Poor beasts, they knew something was going to happen, if it were only from the reek of "compo" on the harness. No hope of Mrs. Sollop

Sollop getting up to Cray's Wood—what a name, by the way, for a rector's wife? And for a Rector! The Rev. Richard Grace Sollop; and it is their name, too; it's certainly none of my making.

I had a sort of feeling that I would like to lend a carriage and "a pair," but at best I could only have proffered a scratch tandem, Black Nannie in the shafts and Nutcracker in front, and this would certainly have interrupted the ceremony.

There was an odd sense of stir about the Green. There was not exactly a crowd, but two or three more men than usual were listening to the blacksmith's famous story of his six beagle puppies; beagle I say, but in the interests of truth and dog-breeding I ought to call it "very-nearly beagle" puppies. The old man who carries telegrams and wears a grey surtout with a rakish air of Stock-Exchange failure about it, has picked up the puppy that favours a fox-terrier, and Mr. Remmitt from the grocer's shop is explaining why he thinks the "spannel bitch" is going to make the best beagle of the lot. Although the whole six are similarly spotted in liver and black upon white, they are all known by separate names—like the above, of a narrowly descriptive nature. They were born and bred in the centre of the Green, and every dog in the village has a sort of proprietary interest in them.

At this moment Mr. Hampshire passed from the telegraph office; he has his bluish-pink trousers on and wears a black coat and waistcoat, all new, a black tie, and a straw hat. He is a very shy man, and he has calculated to a second when he will change to a puce satin tie with white lozenges before he starts; whereas the topper that came by post is to be taken with him and assumed *en route*; I know this, for I saw Frank trying to get it inconspicuously stowed under the cloth flap of the box-seat. What will they

they do with the pasteboard box, I wonder? Throw it away in Ambledon Wood, no doubt, to be picked up by some hawker and used for a baby's cradle or to put a sitting hen in.

Ten o'clock, and he doesn't start till eleven, and yet the poor man cannot be seen outside his own inn without some joke being thrown at him, and a convulsive titter issuing from the knot of boys gathered on the corpse-bench below the lych-gate.

Bang! *Now I know* that that was a champagne cork exploding in the commercial room, and they don't explode of themselves—in an Inn!

Annie runs in to whisper:

"He's got the ring on his third finger, fear he'd forget."

"Well! She must have a large hand if *his* third finger and *hers* are the same size," I observe. "Oh, it can't be the ring."

Annie looks disheartened, but says she will ask Mrs. Groves.

"By the way, how *is* Mrs. Groves this morning?" I had forgotten her till now: she is the housekeeper, only five years Mr. Hampshire's senior and a widow; one or two people had said, before the affair which finishes to-day was heard of . . .

"Oh! she's wonderful down, and she gets a deal of chaff in the bar." In a whisper behind a corner of her apron, "Oh, she 'as been treated bad."

"Ah, she'll be glad when it's over. Is that the carriage? Good gracious, it's not eleven? How grand Tom looks on the box! and I would never have said Bob and Teamster stood so much of a height."

There is a wild flight of a figure across the sweep as with scarlet wings to it, and Frank, pouring with perspiration, slogs at the Teamster's mane with a water-brush, in a last agony of fervour.

"Well, it really does look smart!" I exclaim at intervals to
Annie,

Annie, behind the curtains of my parlour. "That man's hand will be shaken off if the bricklayer gets hold of it." There are at least two dozen workmen and neighbours crowding in the bar-passage, and all the pots in use are quarts.

"A quart bottle of champagne—between three of them," gasps Annie, who has been out for more gossip. "And it *isn't* the ring; he has that in his waistcoat pocket!"

"They're off!"

"What, has he got in?" The poor nervous little man had left the inn with the furtive scuttle of a rabbit breaking cover, and just his head and shoulders appeared in the deep well of the old landau. Mr. Brooker followed—he is to be best man—Frank relinquished the Teamster, much flattened, and Tom whipped the two to a heavy canter. A derisive cheer went up from the little boys upon the corpse-bench and a hearty shout from the work-people at the Inn door. Mr. Hampshire neither lifted his hat nor looked round, but the purple mounted slowly and surely to the back of his ears. It is a trying thing to be married from your own Inn.

III—Cakes and Ale

THE Brewer seemed to be stopping all day; the whole morning he had been rumbling barrels down the cellar-way below my parlour, and in the afternoon when I went out with a wooden trencher full of cut apples for our own beasts, I saw that his large, pale, *café-au-lait* coloured mare and the great white horse that goes beside her were still there. They sniffed at apples, and Black Nannie shot reproachful glances at me over her stall as much as to say:

"Why offer apples to them? Their palates are destroyed by
the

the fermented liquors they are given ; they are fat and stupid with beer. They must be, or they wouldn't pull the loads they do ! ”

Like most brewers, Quarpitt is rather a fine-looking person, and I fell into conversation with him with some pleasure ; his great bass rolled and rumbled like his own waggon, and as he stood, he seemed to be trying to look as much like a vat as possible.

“ Oh, yes,” he said, “ don't come every day, b'long way ; an' there's fine doin's forward to-night. I'm 'ere to take four eighteens ” (he pronounced it four-ray-teens), “ down to the cricket field to-night, to be give away by ”—he waved a large freckled arm and hand towards the Inn door—“ the good gentleman as has now left us.”

“ Four eighteens ! ” I repeated with an air of amazement, not knowing in the least what that was, but judging that when the Brewer assumed the manner popular at his Harmony Club and fell unwittingly into the phrase of a funeral oration, something important must be toward.

I knew more later.

No sooner was my simple tea begun than the boys, who earlier on had adorned the lych-gate, came to lean upon the wood rail that surrounds the cellar opening before my window, to crack nuts thoughtfully upon the flags, and to keep up a tapping of a maddening intermittence upon the wooden cellar-flap. I gathered from their conversation that the band was expected.

Very soon a gentleman strolled up, the pocket of whose black coat bulged suggestive of a cornet and, indeed, when he turned, the nozzle of the instrument disclosed itself, nestling in the groove worn by a week-day foot-rule, which had disappeared with the rest of a joiner's trappings for the nonce.

I was buried in the unsatisfactory tannin of a second cup, when a sound so horrid and inexplicable that fear alone prevented

my choking to death, announced the heretofore unsuspected arrival of the big drum. The rest of the brass was not slow to follow, and about half-an-hour of preliminary pints intervened before the performers took up their position upon the triangle of grass below the sign of "The Merry Hedgehog." To their credit, be it said, they were not yet complete, the oboe lingered. (I gleamed this intelligence from the boy's continual references to "George;" there seemed even to be a question as to whether "George" *would* come.) At length there appeared a saturnine person who bore an oboe in a bag. He took no beer, he nodded sullenly to the circle, or rather, he threw a nod in front of him, and such of the circle as cared to, caught it. He was drawing out a small thumb-browned piece of written music when the drum, who had command of the performers, no doubt because he made most noise, looked inquiringly round and thundered out a prelude boom-boom-boom-boom, which had the effect of drawing certain hesitating cat-calls from the brass. I had heard the drum whisper "the new march," in a tone which was meant to reach his co-musicians, and not the crowd; the crowd was not intended to know that a new march had been sedulously studied in view of the present occasion. George had his eye upon his oboe, and after the boom he spat meditatively beside his shoulder and chirped to his instrument, which responded instantly with a florid growl, lasting about half a minute. The others were too interested in "getting away" and "getting a good place," to notice this observation on the part of George's oboe, but I noticed it, and a dreadful suspicion fell upon me.

Still, the hilarity of the occasion augmented from moment to moment. The church bells had rung out a complimentary peal or two, and only desisted because a woman was to be buried at five o'clock; the bellringers, all save the man who attended to
the

the toll had come into the bar, had their beer (carefully paying for it), and formed up among the crowd near the blacksmith's to listen to the band. Outlying labourers who had left their work began to slouch up with that peculiar report which corduroys will make when the spare material flaps together in walking, the grocer's and baker's carts began to come in from their rounds, and the men hurried their tired horses into the stables, with a shake of hay and no wisp down, the sooner to join the crowd.

All this while "the new march," with an afflicting element of discord from the oboe, blared tunelessly below the sign. A cart had appeared mysteriously, the brewer, passing his mottled hand through his shock of beard and hair (all the colour of "four-ale"), was loading up certain barrels, with the assistance of Frank; then it dawned upon me what "four eighteens" might mean; four times eighteen gallons! . . . The third of my abstruse calculations brought this out at seventy-two gallons; seventy-two gallons of free beer up on the cricket-ground!

While the band sought among its leaflets for a light waltz, which all the village whistled carelessly in advance, and a boy tucked two black bottles labelled "Scottish Nectar" securely into his armpits, I observed a short colloquy to take place between George and the flute, who was old and bearded and of a neutral temper; it resulted in blacker scowls than ever from the oboe, and the bitter tapping of his finger upon a band-part. When, finally, they all formed into line in front of Mr. Brewer Quarpitt, the cart, and the four eighteens, for an adjournment to the cricket-ground, I saw the oboe step moodily into the bar. He had refused to play any more—musical people are notably touchy—owing to some quarrel between him and the drum: he had blown steadily through the Wedding March first of all—which the drum had reserved to take them up the village to the cricket-field.

Nobody

Nobody told me this, but when the Wedding March ultimately started, and the party and the four eighteens, and the crowd and a number of the beagle puppies got under weigh for the cricket-ground, George could be seen striding glumly homeward with the disconsolate and silent oboe in a bag.

At first an air of delicate reserve hung over the populace, and the large white jugs moved slowly above the glasses ; there was a tendency to dawdle in the neighbourhood of the "whelk and winkle barrow," which had taken up a promising corner, but kindly dusk hid many blushes, and with nightfall all tremors were dispersed, and, since it *was* there . . . they might as well . . . and so they did.

It was, I say it with pain, a very drunk village, and a very gay inn by eleven o'clock that night. But then a landlord is not married every day, and who knows how dull things may be when "The Merry Hedgehog" has a missis?

There was but one clear head (I am excepting the Rev. and Mrs. Sollop, of course) and two sore hearts upon the green that night. Mine was the clear head. George's was one of the sore hearts (unless the oboe had one, and that would make a third) and Mrs. Groves, the housekeeper, who had to have a good deal of whisky and very little else, in a claret glass, at intervals during the evening—hers was the other.

"A twelvemonth ago there wasn't one but would have said it would be 'er," Mr. Brewer Quarpitt kept repeating a suspicious number of times as he slapped the big white horse confidently, till every link upon the waggon gave out a note of music. And then, "Never see such a mort o' beer put down so quick in my life," and he gathered up his reins and jangled gaily off upon his homeward way. And I shut down my window to avoid the hymeneal comments of the rustics below.

Four Drawings

By Ethel Reed

I. Puck

II. Enfant Terrible

III. A Nursery-Rhyme Hero

IV. A Nursery-Rhyme Hero



Flower o' the Clove

By Henry Harland

I

IN the first-floor sitting-room of a lodging-house in Great College Street, Westminster, a young man—he was tall and thin, with a good deal of rather longish light-coloured hair, somewhat tumbled about ; and he wore a pince-nez, and was in slippers and the oldest of tattered coats—a man of thirty-something was seated at a writing-table, diligently scribbling at what an accustomed eye might have recognised as “copy,” and negligently allowing the smoke from a cigarette to curl round and stain the thumb and forefinger of his idle hand, when the lodging-house maid-servant opened his door, and announced excitedly, “A lady to see you, sir.”

With the air of one taken altogether by surprise, and at a cruel disadvantage, the writer dropped his pen, and jumped up. He was in slippers and a disgraceful coat, not to dwell upon the condition of his hair. “You ought to have kept her downstairs until——” he began, frowning upon the maid ; and at that point his visitor entered the room.

She was a handsome, dashing-looking young woman, in a toilette that breathed the very last and crispest savour of Parisian elegance :

a hat

a hat that was a tangle of geraniums, an embroidered jacket, white gloves, a skirt that frou-froued breezily as she moved; and she carried an amazing silver-hilted sunshade, a thing like a folded gonfalon, a thing of red silk gleaming through draperies of black lace.

Poising lightly near the threshold, with a bright little smile of interrogation, this bewildering vision said, "Have I the honour of addressing Mr. William Stretton?"

The young man bowed a vague plea of guilty to that name; but his gaze, through the lenses of his pince-nez, was all perplexity and question.

"I'm very fortunate in finding you at home. I've called to see you about a matter of business," she informed him.

"Oh?" he wondered. Then he added, with a pathetic shake of the head, "I'm the last man in the world whom any one could wisely choose to see about a matter of business; but such as I am, I'm all at your disposal."

"So much the better," she rejoined cheerily. "I infinitely prefer to transact business with people who are unbusinesslike. One has some chance of over-reaching them."

"You'll have every chance of over-reaching me," sighed he.

"What a jolly quarter of the town you live in," she commented. "It's so picturesque and Gothic and dilapidated, with such an atmosphere of academic calm. It reminds me of Oxford."

"Yes," assented he, "it is a bit like Oxford. Was your business connected——?"

"Oh, it is like Oxford?" she interrupted. "Then never tell me again that there's nothing in intuitions. I've never been in Oxford, but directly I passed the gateway of Dean's Yard, I felt reminded of it,"

"There's

"There's undoubtedly a lot in intuitions," he agreed; "and for the future I shall carefully abstain from telling you there isn't."

"Those things are gardens, over the way, behind the wall, aren't they?" she asked, looking out of the window.

"Yes, those things are gardens, the gardens of the Abbey. The canons and people have their houses there."

"Very comfortable and nice," said she. "Plenty of grass. And the trees aren't bad, either, for town trees. It must be rather fun to be a canon. As I live," she cried, turning back into the room, "you've got a Pleyel. This is the first Pleyel I've seen in England. Let me congratulate you on your taste in pianos." And with her gloved hands she struck a chord and made a run or two. "You'll need the tuner soon, though. It's just the shadow of a shadow out. I was brought up on Pleyels. Do you know, I've half a mind to make you a confidence?"

"Oh, do make it, I pray you," he encouraged her.

"Well, then, I believe, if you were to offer me a chair, I believe I could bring myself to sit down."

"I beg your pardon," he exclaimed; and she sank rustling into the chair that he pushed forward.

"Well, now for my business," said she. "Would you just put this thing somewhere?" She offered him her sunshade, which he took and handled somewhat gingerly. "Oh, you needn't be afraid. It's quite tame," she laughed, "though I admit it looks a bit ferocious. What a sweet room you've got—so manny, and smoky, and booky. Are they all real books?"

"More or less real," he answered; "as real as any books ever are that a fellow gets for review."

"Oh, you got them for review? How terribly exciting. I've never seen a book before that's actually passed through a reviewer's

reviewer's hands. They don't look much the worse for it. Whatever else you said about them, I trust you didn't deny that they make nice domestic ornaments. But this isn't business. You wouldn't call this business?"

"No, I should call this pleasure," he assured her, laughing.

"*Would* you?" she questioned, raising her eyebrows. "Ah, but then you're English."

"Aren't you?" asked he.

"Do I look English?"

"I'm not sure. You certainly don't dress English."

"Heaven forbid! I'm a miserable sinner, but at least I'm incapable of that. However, if you were really kind, you'd affect just a little curiosity to know the errand to which you owe my presence."

"I'm devoured by curiosity."

"You are? Then why don't you show it?"

"Perhaps because I have a sense of humour—amongst other reasons."

"Well, since you're devoured by curiosity, you must know," she began; but broke off suddenly—"Apropos, I wonder whether *you* could be induced to tell *me* something."

"I daresay I could, if it's anything within my sphere of knowledge."

"Then tell me, please, why you keep your Japanese fan in your fireplace."

"Why shouldn't I? Doesn't it strike you as a good place for it?"

"Admirable. But my interest was psychological. I was wondering by what mental process you came to hit upon it."

"Well, then, to be frank, it wasn't I who hit upon it; it isn't my Japanese fan. It's a conceit of my landlady's. This
is

is an age of paradox, you know. Would you prefer silver paper?"

"Must one have one or the other?"

"You're making it painfully clear," he cautioned her, "that you've never lived in lodgings."

"If you go on at this rate," she retorted, laughing, "I shall never get my task accomplished. Here are twenty times that I've commenced it, and twenty times you've put me off. Shall we now, at last, proceed seriously to business?"

"Not on my account, I beg. I'm not in the slightest hurry."

"You said you were devoured by curiosity."

"Did I say that?"

"Certainly you did."

"It must have been aphasia. I meant contentment."

"Devoured by contentment?"

"Why not, as well as by curiosity?"

"The phrase is novel."

"It's the occupation of my life to seek for novel phrases. I'm what somebody or other has called a literary man."

"And you enjoy what somebody or other has called beating about the bush?"

"Hugely—with such a fellow-beater."

"You drive me to extremities. I see there's nothing for it but to plunge in *medias res*. You must know, then, that I have been asked to call upon you by a friend—by my friend Miss Johannah Rothe—I beg your pardon; I never *can* remember that she's changed her name—my friend Miss Johannah Silver—but Silver *née* Rothe—of Silver Towers, in the County of Sussex."

"Ah?" said he. "Ah, yes. Then never tell me again that there's nothing in intuitions. I've never met Miss Silver, but
directly

directly you crossed the threshold of this room, I began to feel vaguely reminded of her."

"Oh, there's a lot in intuitions," she agreed. "But don't think to disconcert me. My friend Miss Silver——"

"Your *friend*?"

"Considering the sacrifice I'm making on her behalf to-day, it's strange you should throw doubt upon my friendship for her."

"You make your sacrifices with a cheerful countenance. I should never have guessed that you weren't entirely happy. But forgive my interruption. You were about to say that your friend Miss Silver——"

"My occasional friend. Sometimes, I confess, we quarrel like everything, and remain at daggers drawn for months. She's such a flighty creature, dear Johannah, she not infrequently gets me into a perfect peck of trouble. But since she's fallen heir to all this money, you'd be surprised to behold the devotion her friends have shown her. I couldn't very well refuse to follow their example, One's human, you see; and one can't dress like this for nothing, can one?"

"Upon my word, I'm not in a position to answer you. I've never tried," laughed he.

"In the absence of evidence to the contrary, I think we may safely assume one can't," said she. "However, here you are, beating about the bush again. I come to you as Johannah's emissary. She desires me to ask you several questions."

"Yes?" said he, a trifle uncomfortably.

"She would be glad to know," his visitor declared, looking straight into his eyes, and smiling a little gravely, "why you have been so excessively nasty to her!"

"Have I been nasty to her?" he asked, with an innocence that was palpably counterfeit.

"Don't

"Don't you think you have?"

"I don't see how."

"Don't you think you've responded somewhat ungraciously to her overtures of friendship? Do you think it was nice to answer her letters with those curt little formal notes of yours? Look. Johannah sat down to write to you. And she began her letter *Dear Mr. Stretton*. And then she simply couldn't. So she tore up the sheet and began another *My dear Cousin Will*. And what did she receive in reply? A note beginning *Dear Miss Silver*. Do you think that was kind? Don't you think it was the least bit mortifying? And why have you refused in such a stiff-necked way to go down and see her at Silver Towers?"

"Oh," he protested, "in all fairness, in all logic, your questions ought to be put the other way round."

"Bother logic! But put them any way you like."

"What right had Miss Silver to expect me to multiply the complications of my life by rushing into an ecstatic friendship with her? And why, being very well as I am in town just now, why should I disarrange myself by a journey into the country?"

"Why, indeed? I'm sure I can give no reason. Why should one ever do any one else a kindness? Your cousin has conceived a great desire to meet you."

"Oh, a great desire! She'll live it down. A man named Burrell has been stuffing her up."

"Stuffing her up? The expression is new to me."

"Greening her, filling her head with all sorts of nonsensical delusions, painting my portrait for her in all the colours of the rainbow. Oh, I know my Burrell. He's tried to stuff *me* up, too, about her."

"Oh? Has he? What has he said?"

"The

"The usual rubbishy things one does say, when one wants to stuff a fellow up."

"For instance?"

"Oh, that she's tremendously good-looking, with hair and eyes and things, and very charming."

"What a dear good person the man named Burrell must be."

"He's not a bad chap, but you must remember that he's her solicitor."

"And so you weren't to be stuffed?"

"If she was charming and good-looking, it was a reason the more for avoiding her."

"Oh?"

"There's nothing on earth so tiresome as charming women. They're all exactly alike."

"Thank you," his guest exclaimed, bowing.

"Oh, nobody could pretend that *you're* exactly alike," he said. "I own at once that you're delightfully different. But Burrell has no knack for character drawing."

"You're extremely flattering. But aren't you taking a slightly one-sided point of view? Let us grant, for the sake of the argument, that it *is* Johannah's bad luck to be charming and good-looking. Nevertheless, she still has claims on you."

"Has she?"

"She's your cousin."

"Oh, by the left hand," said he.

She stared for an instant, biting her lip. Then she laughed.

"And only my second or third cousin at that," he went on serenely.

She looked at him with eyes that were half whimsical, half pleading. "Would you mind being quite serious for a moment?" she asked. "Because Johannah's situation, absurd as it seems, really

really is terribly serious for Johannah, I should like to submit it to your better judgment. We'll drop the question of cousinship, if you wish—though it's the simple fact that you're her only blood-relation in this country, where she feels herself the forlornest sort of alien. She's passed her entire life in Italy and France, you know, and this is the first visit she's made to England since her childhood. But we'll drop the question of cousinship. At any rate, Johannah is a human being. Well, consider her plight a little. She finds herself in the most painful, the most humiliating circumstances that can be imagined; and you're the only person living who can make them easier for her. Involuntarily—in spite of herself—she's come into possession of a fortune that naturally, morally, belongs to you. She can't help it. It's been left to her by will—by the will of a man who never saw her, never had any kind of relations with her, but chose her for his heir just because her mother, who died when Johannah was a baby, had chanced to be his cousin. And there the poor girl is. Can't you see how like a thief she must feel at the best? Can't you see how much worse you make it for her, when she holds out her hand, and you refuse to take it? Is that magnanimous of you? Isn't it cruel? You couldn't treat her with greater unkindness if she'd actually designed, and schemed, and intrigued, to do you out of your inheritance, instead of coming into it in the passive way she has. After all, she's a human being, she's a woman. Think of her pride."

"Think of mine," said he.

"I can't see that your pride is involved."

"To put it plainly, I'm the late Sir William Silver's illegitimate son."

"Well? What of that?"

"Do you fancy I should enjoy being taken up and patronised by his legitimate heir?"

"Oh!"

"Oh!" she cried, starting to her feet. "You can't think I would be capable of anything so base as that."

And her saw that her eyes had suddenly filled with tears.

"I beg your pardon, I beg your pardon a thousand times," he said. "You would be utterly incapable of anything that was not generous and noble. But you must remember that I had never seen you. How could I know?"

"Well, now that you *have* seen me," she responded, her eyes all smiles again, "now that I've put *my* pride in my pocket, and bearded you in your den, I don't mind confiding to you that it's nearly lunch-time, and also that I'm ravenously hungry. Could you ring your bell, and order up something in the nature of meat and drink? And while you are about it, you might tell your landlady or some one to pack your bag. We take," she mentioned, examining a tiny watch, that seemed nothing more than a frivolous incrustation of little diamonds and rubies, "we take the three-sixteen for Silver Towers."

II

Seated opposite her in the railway-carriage, as their train bore them through the pleasant dales and woods of Surrey, Will Stretton fell to studying his cousin's appearance. "Burrell was right," he told himself; "she really is tremendously good-looking," and that, in spite of a perfectly reckless irregularity of feature. Her nose was too small, but it was a delicate, pert, pretty nose, notwithstanding. Her mouth was too large, but it was a beautiful mouth, all the same, softly curved and red as scarlet, with sensitive, humorous little quirks in its corners. Her eyes he could admire without reservation, brown and pellucid, with the wittiest, teasingest, mockingest lights dancing in them, yet at the same time a deeper

deeper light that was pensive, tender, womanly. Her hair, too, he decided, was quite lovely, abundant, undulating, black, blue-black even, but fine, but silky, escaping in a flutter of small curls above her brow. "It's like black foam," he said. And he would have been ready to go to war for her complexion, though it was so un-English a complexion that one might have mistaken her for a native of the France or Italy she had inhabited: warm, dusky, white, with an elusive shadow of rose glowing through it. Yes, she was tremendously good-looking, he concluded. She looked fresh and strong and real. She looked alert, alive, full of the spring and the joy of life. She looked as if she could feel quick and deep, as if her blood flowed swiftly, and was red. He liked her face, and he liked her figure—it was supple and vigorous. He liked the way she dressed—there was something daring and spirited in the unabashed, whole-souled luxury of it. "Who ever saw such a hat—or such a sunshade?" he reflected.

"There'll be no coach-and-four to meet us at the station," she warned him, as they neared their journey's end, "because I have no horses. But we'll probably find Madame Dornaye there, *piaffer*-ing in person. Can you resign yourself to the prospect of driving up to your ancestral mansion in a hired fly?"

"I could even, at a pinch, resign myself to walking," he declared. "But who is Madame Dornaye?"

"Madame Dornaye is my burnt-offering to that terrible sort of fetich called the County. She's what might be technically termed my chaperon."

"Oh, to be sure. I had forgotten. Of course, you'd have a chaperon."

"By no means of course. Until the other day I'd never thought of such a thing. But it's all along o' the man named

Burrell. He insisted that I mustn't live alone—that I was too young. He has such violent hallucinations about people's ages. He said the County would be horrified. I must have an old woman, a sound, reliable old woman, to live with me. I begged and implored *him* to come and try it, but he protested with tears in his eyes that he wasn't an old woman. So I sent for Madame Dornaye, who is, every inch of her. She's the widow of a man who used to be a professor at the Sorbonne, or something. I've known her for at least a hundred years. She's connected in some roundabout way with the family of my father's step-mother. She's like a little dry brown leaf; and she plays Chopin *comme pas un*; and she lends me a false air of respectability, I suppose. She calls me *Jeanne ma fille*, if you can believe it, as if my name weren't common Johannah. If you chance to please her, she'll very likely call you *Jean mon fils*. But see how things turn out. The man named Burrell also insisted that I must put on mourning, as a symbol of my grief for the late Sir William. That I positively refused to think of. So the County's horrified, all the same—which proves the futility of concessions."

"Oh?" questioned Will. "What does the County do?"

"It comes and calls on me, and walks round me, and stares, with a funny little deprecating smile, as if I were some outlandish and not very proper animal, cast up by the sea. To begin with, there's the vicar, with all his wives and daughters. *Their* emotions are complicated by the fact that I'm a Papist. Then there's old Lord Belgard; and there's Mrs. Breckenbridge, with her marriageable sons; and there's the Bishop of Salchester, with his Bishopess, Dean, and Chapter. The dear good people make up parties in the afternoon, to come and have a look at me; and they sip my tea with an air of guilt, as if it smacked of profligacy; and they suppress demure little knowing glances among themselves. And then

then at last they go away, shaking their heads, and talking me over in awe-struck voices."

"I can see them, I can hear them," Will laughed.

"Haven't you in English a somewhat homely proverbial expression about the fat and the fire?" asked Johannah.

"About the fat getting into the fire? Yes," said Will.

"Well, then, to employ that somewhat homely proverbial expression," she went on, "the fat got into the fire at the Bishop's palace. Mrs. Rawley was kind enough to write and ask us to dinner, and she added that she had heard I sang, and wouldn't I bring some music? But nobody had ever told me that it's bad form in England to sing *well*. So, after dinner, when Mrs. Rawley said, 'Now, Miss Silver, do sing us something,' I made the incredible blunder of singing as well as I could. I sang the *Erkönig*, and Madame Dornaye played the accompaniment, and we both did our very bestest, in our barefaced, Continental way. We were a little surprised, and vastly enlightened, to perceive that we'd shocked everybody. And by-and-by the Bishop's daughters consented to sing in their turn, and then we saw the correct British style of doing it. If you don't want to be considered rowdyish and noisy in a British drawing-room, you must sing under your breath, faintly, faintingly, as if you were afraid somebody might hear you."

"My poor dear young lady," her cousin commiserated her, "fancy your only just discovering that. It's one of the foundation-stones of our social constitution. If you sing with any art or with any feeling, you expose yourself to being mistaken for a paid professional."

"Another thing that's horrified the County," pursued Johannah, "is the circumstance that I keep no horses. I don't like horses—except in pictures. In pictures, I admit at once, they make a
very

very pleasant decorative motive. But in life—they're too strong and too unintelligent; and they're perpetually bolting. By-the-bye, please choose a good feeble jaded one, when you engage our fly. I'm devoted to donkeys, though. They're every bit as decorative as the horse, and they're really wise—they only baulk. I had a perfect love of a little donkey in Italy; his name was Angelo. If I decide to stay in England, I shall have a spanking team of four donkeys, with scarlet trappings and silver bells. But the County says, 'Oh, you *must* have horses,' and casts its eyes appealingly to heaven when I say I *won't*."

"The County lacks a sense of situations. It's really a deliciously fresh one—a big country house, and not a horse in the stables."

"Apropos of the house, that brings me to another point," said she. "The County feels very strongly that I ought to put the house in repair—that dear old wonderful, rambling, crumbling house. They take it as the final crushing evidence of my depravity, that I prefer to leave it in its present condition of picturesque decay. I'm sure you agree with me, that it would be high treason to allow a carpenter or mason to lay a hand on it. By-the-bye, I hope you have no conscientious scruples against speaking French; for Madame Dornaye only knows two words of English, and those she mispronounces. There she is—yes, that little black and grey thing, in the frock. She's come to meet me, because we had a bet. You owe me five shillings," she called out to Madame Dornaye, as Will helped her from the carriage. "You see, I've brought him."

Madame Dornaye, who had a pair of humorous old French eyes, responded, blinking them, "Oh, before I pay you, I shall have to be convinced that it is really he."

"I am afraid it's really he," laughed Will; "but rather than let

so immaterial a detail cost you five shillings, I'm prepared to maintain with my dying breath that there's no such person."

"Don't mind him," interposed Johannah. "He's trying to flatter you up, because he wants you to call him *Jean mon fils*, as if his name weren't common William." Then, to him, "Go," she said, with an imperious gesture, "go and find a vehicle with a good tired horse."

And when the vehicle with the good tired horse had brought them to their destination, and they stood before the hall-door of Silver Towers, Johannah looked up at the escutcheon carved in the pale-grey stone above it, and said pensively, "On a field azure, a heart gules, crowned with an imperial crown or; and the motto, 'Qu'il régne!' If, when you got my first letter, Cousin Will, if you'd remembered the arms of our family, and the motto—if you had 'let it reign'—I should have been spared the trouble and expense of a journey to town to-day."

"But I should have missed a precious experience," said he. "You forget what I couldn't help being supremely conscious of—that I bear those arms with a difference. I hope, though, that you won't begrudge the journey to town. I think there are certain aspects of your character that I might never have discovered if I'd met you in any other way."

That evening Johannah wrote a letter :

"DEAR MR. BURRELL :

"Ce que femme veut, Dieu le veut." The first part of my rash little prophecy has already come true. Will Stretton is staying in this house, a contented guest. At the present moment he's hovering about the piano, where Madame Dornaye is playing Chopin; and he's

he's just remarked that he never hears Chopin without thinking of those lines of Browning's :

‘I discern
Infinite passion, and the pain
Of finite hearts that yearn.’

I quite agree with you, he *is* a charming creature. So now I repeat the second part of my rash little prophecy : Before the summer's over he will have accepted at least a good half of his paternal fortune. *Ce que femme veut, le diable ne saurait pas l'empêcher.* He will he shall, even if I have to marry him to make him.

“Yours ever

“JOHANNAH SILVER.”

III

Will left his room somewhat early the next morning, and went down into the garden. The sun was shining briskly, the dew still sparkled on the grass, the air was heady with a hundred keen earth-odours. A mile away, beyond the wide green levels of Sumpter Meads, the sea glowed blue as the blue of larkspur, under the blue June sky. And everywhere, everywhere, innumerable birds piped and twittered, filling the world with a sense of gay activity, of whole-hearted, high-hearted life.

“What ! up already ?” a voice called softly, from behind him.

He turned, and met Johannah.

“Why not, since you are ?” he responded.

She laughed, and gave him her hand, a warm, elastic hand, firm of grasp. In a garden-hat and a white frock, her eyes beaming, her cheeks faintly flushed, she seemed to him a sort of beautiful incarnation of the spirit of the summer morning, its freshness, and sweetness, and richness.

“Oh,

"Oh, we furriners," she explained; "we're all shocking early risers. In Italy we love the day when it is young, and deem it middle-aged by eight o'clock. But in England I had heard it was the fashion to lie late."

"I woke, and couldn't go to sleep again, so I tossed the fashion to the winds. Perhaps it was a sort of dim presentiment that I should surprise Aurora walking in the garden, that banished slumber."

"Flowery speeches are best met by flowery deeds," said she. "Come with me to the roserie, and I will give you a red, red rose."

And in the roserie, as she stood close to him, pinning the red, red rose in his coat, her smooth cheek and fragrant hair so near, so near, he felt his heart all at once begin to throb, and he had to control a sudden absurd longing to put his arms round her and kiss her. "Good heavens," he said to himself, "I must be on my guard."

"There," she cried, bestowing upon her task a gentle pat, by way of finish, "that makes us quits." And she raised her eyes to his, and held them for an instant with a smile that did anything but soothe the trouble in his heart, such a sly little teasing, cryptic smile. Could it possibly be, he wondered wildly, that she had divined his monstrous impulse, and was coquetting with it?

"Now let's be serious," she said, leading the way back to the lawn. "It's like a hanging-garden, high up here, with the meads and the sea below, isn't it? And apropos of the sea, I would beg you to observe its colour. Is it blue? I would also ask you kindly to cast an eye on that line of cliffs, there to the eastward, as it goes winding in and out away to the vanishing-point. Are the cliffs white?"

"Oh, yes, the cliffs are white," asserted Will.

"How

"How can you tell such dreadful fibs?" she reproached him. "The cliffs are prismatic. White, indeed! when they gleam with every transparent tint from rose to violet, as if the light that falls on them had passed through rubies and amethysts, and all sorts of precious stones. That is an optical effect due doubtless to reflection or refraction or something—no?"

"I should say it was almost certainly due to something," he acquiesced.

"And now," she continued, "will you obligingly turn your attention to the birds? Tweet-weet-willow-will-weet. I don't know what it means, but they repeat it so often and so earnestly, I'm sure it must be true."

"It's relatively true," said he. "It means that it's a fine morning, and their digestion's good, and their affairs are prospering—nothing more than that. They're material-minded little beasts, you know."

"All truth is relative," said she, "and one's relatively a material-minded little beast oneself. Is the greensward beyond there (relatively) spangled with buttercups and daisies? Is the park leafy, and shadowy, and mysterious, and (relatively) delightful? Is the may in bloom? *Voyons donc!* you'll never be denying that the may's in bloom. And is the air like an elixir? I vow, it goes to one's head like some ethereal elixir? And yet you have the effrontery to tell me that you're pining for the flesh-pots of Great College Street, Westminster, S.W."

"Oh, did I tell you that? Ah, well, it must have been with intent to deceive, for nothing could be farther from the truth."

"The relative truth? Then you're not homesick?"

"Not consciously."

"Neither am I," said she.

"Why should you be?" said he.

"This

"This is positively the first day since my arrival in England that I haven't been, more or less," she answered.

"Oh?" he questioned sympathetically.

"You can't think how *dépaysée* I've felt. After having lived all one's life in Prague, suddenly to find oneself translated to the mistress-ship of an English country house."

"In Prague? I thought you had lived in Rome and Paris, chiefly."

"Prague is a figure of rhetoric. I mean the capital of Bohemia. Wasn't my father a sculptor? And wasn't I born in a studio? And haven't my playmates and companions always been of Florizel the loyal subjects? So whether you call it Rome or Paris or Florence or Naples, it was Prague, none the less."

"At that rate, I live in Prague myself, and we're compatriots," said Will.

"That's no doubt why I don't feel homesick any more. Where two of the faithful are gathered together they can form a miniature Prague of their own. If I decide to stay in England, I shall send for a lot of my Prague friends to come and visit me, and you can send for an equal number of yours; and then we'll turn this bright particular corner of the British Empire into a province of Bohemia, and the County may be horrified with reason. But meanwhile, let's be Pragueians in practice as well as theory. Let's go to the strawberry beds, and steal some strawberries."

She walked a little in front of him. Her garden-hat had come off, and she was swinging it at her side, by its ribbons. Will noticed the strong, lithe sway and rhythm of her body, as she moved. "What a *woman* she is," he thought; "how one feels her sex." And with that, he all at once became aware of a singular depression. "Surely," a malevolent little voice within him argued,

argued, "woman that she is, and having passed all her life with the subjects of Florizel, surely, surely, she must have had . . . experiences. She must have loved—she must have been loved." And (as if it was any of his business!) a kind of vague jealousy of her past, a kind of suspiciousness and irrelevant resentment, began to burn dully, a small spot of pain, somewhere in his breast.

She, apparently, was in the highest spirits. There was something expressive of joyousness in the mere way she tripped over the grass, swinging her garden-hat like a basket; and presently she fell to singing, merrily, in a light voice, that prettiest of old French songs, *Les Trois Princesses*, dancing forward to its measure:

"Derrière' chez mon père,
(Vole, vole, mon cœur, vole!)
Derrière' chez mon père,
Ya un pommier doux,
Tout doux, et iou,
Ya un pommier doux."

"Don't you like that song?" she asked. "The tune of it is like the smell of faded rose-leaves, isn't it?"

And suddenly she began to sing a different one, possibly an improvisation:

"And so they set forth for the strawberry beds,
The strawberry beds, the strawberry beds,
And so they set forth for the strawberry beds,
On Christmas day in the morning."

And when they had reached the strawberry beds, she knelt, and plucked a great red berry, and then leapt up again, and held it to her cousin's lips, saying, "Bite—but spare my fingers." And so, laughing,

laughing, she fed it to him, while he, laughing too, consumed it. But when her pink finger-tips all but touched his lips, his heart had a convulsion, and it was only by main-force that he restrained his kisses. And he said to himself, "I must go back to town to-morrow. This will never do. It would be the devil to pay if I should let myself fall in love with her."

"Oh, yes, I've felt terribly *dépaysée*," she told him again, herself nibbling a berry. "I've felt like the traditional cat in the strange garret. And then, besides, there was my change of name. I can't reconcile myself to being called Miss Silver. I can't realise the character. It's like an affectation, like making-believe. Directly I relax my vigilance, I forget, and sink back into Johannah Rothe. I'm always Johannah Rothe when I'm alone. Directly I'm alone, I push a big *ouf*, and send Miss Silver to Cracklimboo. Then somebody comes, and, with a weary sigh, I don my sheep's clothing again. Of course, there's nothing in a name, and yet there's everything. There's a furious amount of mental discomfort when the name doesn't fit."

"It's a discomfort that will pass," he said consolingly. "The change of name is a mere formality—a condition attached to coming into a property. In England, you know, it's a rather frequent condition."

"I'm aware of that. But to me it seems symbolic—symbolic of my whole situation, which is false, abnormal. Silver? Silver? It's a name meant for a fair person, with light hair and a white skin. And here I am, as black as any Gipsy. And then! It's a condition attached to coming into a property. Well, I come into a property to which I have no more moral right than I have to the coat on your back; and I'm obliged to do it under an *alias*, like a thief in the night."

"Oh, my dear young lady," he cried out, "you've the very
best

best of rights, moral as well as legal. You come into a property that is left to you by will, and you're the last representative of the family in whose hands it has been for I forget how many hundreds of years."

"That," said she, "is a question I shall not refuse to discuss with you upon some more fitting occasion. For the present I am tempted to perpetrate a simply villainous pun, but I forbear. Suffice it to say that I consider the property that I've come into as nothing more nor less than a present made me by my cousin, William Stretton. No—don't interrupt! I happen to know my facts. I happen to know that if Will Stretton hadn't, for reasons in the highest degree honourable to himself, quarrelled and broken with his father, and refused to receive a penny from him, I happen to know, I say, that Sir William Silver would have left Will Stretton everything he possessed in the world. So, you see, I'm indebted to my Quixotic cousin for something in the neighbourhood, I'm told, of eight thousand a year. Rather a handsome little present, isn't it? Furthermore, let me add in passing, I absolutely forbid my cousin to call me his dear young lady, as if he were seven hundred years my senior and only a casual acquaintance. A really nice cousin would take the liberty of calling me by my Christian name."

"I'll take the liberty of calling you by some exceedingly *un-Christian* name, if you don't leave off talking that impossible rot about my making you a present."

"I wasn't talking impossible rot about your making me a present. I was merely telling you how *dépaysée* I'd felt. The rest was parenthetical. So now, then, keep your promise, call me Johannah."

"Johannah," he called submissively.

"Will," said she. "And when you feel, Will, that on the whole,

whole, Will, you've had strawberries enough, Will, quite to destroy your appetite, perhaps it would be as well if we should go in to breakfast, Willie."

IV

They were seated on the turf, under a great tree, in the park, amid a multitude of bright-coloured cushions, Johannah, Will, and Madame Dornaye. It was three weeks later—whence it may be inferred that he had abandoned his resolution to "go back to town to-morrow." He was smoking a cigarette; Madame Dornaye was knitting; Johannah, hatless, in an indescribable confection of cream-coloured muslin, her head pillowed in a scarlet cushion against the body of the tree, was gazing off towards the sea with dreamy eyes.

"Will," she called languidly, by-and-by.

"Yes?" he responded.

"Do you happen by any chance to belong to that sect of philosophers who regard gold as a precious metal?"

"From the little I've seen of it, I am inclined to regard it as precious—yes," he answered.

"Well, then, I wouldn't be so lavish of it, if I were you," said she.

"If you don't take care," said he, "you'll force me to admit that I haven't an idea of what you're driving at."

"I'm driving at your silence. You're as silent as a statue. Please talk a little."

"What shall I talk about?"

"Anything. Nothing. Tell us a story."

"I don't know any stories."

"Then the least you can do is to invent one."

"What

"What sort of story would you like?"

"There's only one sort of story a woman ever sincerely likes—especially on a hot summer's afternoon, in the country."

"Oh, I couldn't possibly invent a love-story."

"Then tell us a true one. You needn't be afraid of shocking Madame Dornaye. She's a realist herself."

"Jeanne ma fille!" murmured Madame Dornaye, reprovingly.

"The only true love-story I could tell has a somewhat singular defect," said he. "There's no heroine."

"That's like the story of what's-his-name—Narcissus."

"With the vastest difference. The hero of my story wasn't in love with his own image. He was in love with a beautiful princess."

"Then how can you have the face to say that there's no heroine?"

"There isn't any heroine. At the same time, there's nothing else. The story's all about her. You see, she never existed."

"You said it was a *true* love-story."

"So it is—literally true."

"I asked for a story, and you give me a riddle."

"Oh, no, it's a story all the same. Its title is *Much Ado about Nobody*."

"Oh? It runs in my head that I've met with something or other with a similar title before."

"Precisely. Something or other by one of the Elizabethans. That's how it came to occur to me. I take my goods where I find them. However, do you want to hear the story?"

"Oh, if you're determined to tell it, I daresay I can steel myself to listen."

"On second thoughts, I'm determined not to tell it."

"Bother! Don't be disagreeable. Tell it at once."

"Well,

"Well, then, there isn't any story. It's simply an absurd little freak of child psychology. It's the story of a boy who fell in love with a girl—a girl that never was, on sea or land. It happened in Regent Street, of all romantic places, 'one day still fierce, 'mid many a day struck calm.' I had gone with my mother to her milliner's. I think I was ten or eleven. And while my mother was transacting her business with the milliner, I devoted my attention to the various hats and bonnets that were displayed about the shop. And presently I hit on one that gave me a sensation. It was a straw hat, with brown ribbons, and cherries, great glossy red and purple cherries. I looked at it—and suddenly I got a vision, a vision of a girl. Oh, the loveliest, loveliest girl! She was about eighteen (a self-respecting boy of eleven, you know, always chooses a girl of about eighteen to fall in love with), and she had the brightest brown eyes, and the rosiest cheeks, and the curliest hair, and a smile and a laugh that made one's heart thrill and thrill with unutterable blisses. And there hung her hat, as if she had just come in, and taken it off, and passed into another room. There hung her hat, suggestive of her as only people's hats know how to be suggestive; and there sat I, my eyes devouring it, my soul transported. The very air of the shop seemed all at once to have become fragrant—with the fragrance that had been shaken from her garments as she passed. I went home, hopelessly, frantically in love. I loved that non-existent young woman, with a passion past expressing, for at least half a year. I was always thinking of her, she was always with me, everywhere. How I used to talk to her, and tell her all my childish fancies, desires, questionings; how I used to sit at her feet and listen! She never laughed at me. Sometimes she would let me kiss her—I declare, my heart still jumps at the memory of it. Sometimes I would hold her hand or play with her hair. And all

all the *real* girls I met seemed so tame and commonplace by contrast with her. And then, little by little, I suppose, her image faded away.—Rather an odd experience, wasn't it?"

"Very, very odd; very strange, and very pretty. It seems as if it ought to have some allegorical significance, though I can't perceive one. It would be interesting to know what sort of real girl, if any, ended by becoming the owner of that hat. You weren't shocked, were you?" Johannah inquired of Madame Dornaye.

"Not by the story. But the heat is too much for me," said that lady, gathering up her knitting. "I am going to the house to make a siesta."

Will rose, as she did, and stood looking vaguely after her, as she moved away. Johannah nestled her head deeper in her cushion, and half closed her eyes. And for a while neither she nor her cousin spoke. A faint, faint breeze whispered in the tree-tops; now a twig snapped; now a bird dropped a solitary liquid note. For the rest, all was still summer heat and woodland perfume. Here and there the greensward round them, dark in the shadow of dense foliage, was diapered with vivid yellow by sunbeams that filtered through.

"Oh, dear me," Johannah sighed at last.

"What is it?" Will demanded.

"Here you are, silent as eternity again. Come and sit down—here—near to me."

She indicated a position with a lazy movement of her hand. He obediently sank upon the grass.

"You're always silent nowadays, when we're alone," she complained.

"Am I? I hadn't noticed that."

"Then you're extremely unobservant. Directly we're alone,
you

you appear to lose the power of speech. You mope and moon, and gaze off at things beyond the horizon, and never open your mouth. One might suppose you had something on your mind. Have you? What is it? Confide it to me, and you can't think how relieved you'll feel."

"I haven't anything on my mind," said he.

"Oh? Ah, then you're silent with me because I bore you? You find me an uninspiring talk-mate! Thank you."

"You know perfectly well that that's preposterous nonsense."

"Well, then, what is it? Why do you never talk to me when we're alone?"

"But I do talk to you. I talk too much. Perhaps *I'm* afraid of boring *you*."

"You know perfectly well that that's a preposterous subterfuge. You've got something on your mind. You're keeping something back." She paused for a second; then, softly, wistfully, "Tell me what it is, Will, *please*." And she looked eagerly, pleadingly, into his eyes.

He looked away from her. "Upon my word, there's nothing to tell," he said, but his tone was a little forced.

She broke into a merry peal of laughter, looking at him now with eyes that were derisive.

"What are you laughing at?" he asked.

"At you, Will," said she. "What else could you imagine?"

"I'm flattered to think you find me so amusing."

"Oh, you're supremely amusing. 'Refrain thou shalt; thou shalt refrain!' Is that your motto, Will? If I were a man I'd choose another. 'Be bold, be bold, and everywhere be bold!' That should be my motto if I were a man."

"But as you're a woman——"

"It's my motto, all the same," she interrupted. "Do you mean

mean to say you've not discovered that yet? Oh, Will, if I were you, and you were I, how differently we should be employing this heaven-sent summer's afternoon."

"What should we be doing?"

"That's a secret. Pray the fairies to-night to transpose our souls, and you'll know by to-morrow morning—if the fairies grant your prayer. But in the meanwhile you must try to entertain me. Tell me another story."

"I can't think of any more stories till I've had my tea."

"You shan't have any tea unless you earn it. Now that Madame Dornaye's no longer present, you can tell me of some of your grown-up love affairs, some of your flesh-and-blood ones."

"I've never had a grown-up love affair."

"Oh, come! you can't expect me to believe that."

"It's the truth, all the same."

"Well, then, it's high time you *should* have one. How old did you say you were?"

"I'm thirty-three."

"And you've never had a love affair! *Fi donc!* I'm barely twenty-eight, and I've had a hundred."

"Have you?" he asked, a little ruefully.

"No, I haven't. But everybody's had at least one. So tell me yours."

"Upon my word, I've not had even one."

"It seems incredible. How have you contrived it?"

"The circumstances of my birth contrived it for me. It would be impossible for me to have a love affair with a woman I could love."

"Impossible? For goodness' sake, why?"

"What woman would accept the addresses of a man without a name?"

"Haven't

"Haven't you a name? Methought I'd heard your name was William Stretten."

"You know what I mean."

"Then permit me to remark that what you mean is quite superlatively silly. If you loved a woman, wouldn't you tell her so?"

"Not if I could help it."

"But suppose the woman loved you?"

"Oh, it wouldn't come to that."

"But suppose it *had* come to that? Suppose she'd set her heart upon you? Would it be fair to her not to tell her?"

"What would be the good of my telling her, since I couldn't possibly ask her to marry me?"

"The fact might interest her, apart from the question of its consequences. But suppose *she* told *you*? Suppose *she* asked *you* to marry *her*?"

"She wouldn't."

"All hypotheses are admissible. Suppose she should?"

"I couldn't marry her."

"You'd find it rather an awkward job refusing, wouldn't you? And what reasons could you give?"

"Ten thousand reasons. I'm a bastard. That begins and ends it. It would dishonour her, and it would dishonour me; and, worst of all, it would dishonour my mother."

"It would certainly *not* dishonour you, nor the woman you married. That's the sheerest, antiquated, exploded rubbish. And how on earth could it dishonour your mother?"

"For me to take as my wife a woman who could not respect her? My mother's memory is for me the sacredest of sacred things. You know something of her history. You know that she was in every sense but a legal sense my father's wife. You know

know why they couldn't be married legally. You know, too, how he treated her—and how she died. Do you suppose I could marry a woman who would always think of my mother as of one who had done something shameful?"

"Oh, but no woman with a spark of nobility in her soul would or could do that," Johannah cried.

"Every woman brought up in the usual way, with the usual prejudices, the usual traditions, thinks evil of the woman who has had an illegitimate child."

"Not every woman. I, for instance. Do you imagine that I could think evil of your mother, Will?"

"Oh, you're entirely different from other women. You're——"
But he stopped at that.

"Then—just for the sake of a case in point—if *I* were the woman you chanced to be in love with, and if I simultaneously chanced to be in love with you, you *could* see your way to marrying *me*?"

"What's the use of discussing that?"

"For its metaphysical interest. Answer me."

"There are other reasons why I couldn't marry *you*."

"I'm not good-looking enough?"

"Don't be silly."

"Not young enough?"

"Oh, I say! Let's talk of something reasonable."

"Not old enough, perhaps?"

He was silent.

"Not wise enough? Not foolish enough?" she persisted.

"You're foolish enough, in all conscience," said he.

"Well, then, why? What are the reasons why you couldn't marry *me*?"

"What *is* the good of talking about this!"

"I want

"I want to know. A man has the hardihood to inform me to my face that he'd spurn my hand, even if I offered it to him. I insist upon knowing why."

"You know why. And you know that 'spurn' is very far from the right word."

"I don't know why. I insist upon your telling me."

"You know that you're Sir William Silver's heiress, I suppose."

"Oh, come! that's not *my* fault. How could *that* matter?"

"Look here, I'm not going to make an ass of myself by explaining the obvious."

"I daresay I'm very stupid, but it isn't obvious to me."

"Well, then, let's drop the subject," he suggested.

"I'll not drop the subject till you've elucidated it. If you were in love with me, Will, and I were in love with you, how on earth could it matter, my being Sir William Silver's heiress?"

"Wouldn't I seem a bit mercenary if I asked you to marry me?"

"Oh, Will!" she cried. "Don't tell me you're such a prig as that. What! if you loved me, if I loved you, you'd give me up, you'd break my heart, just for fear lest idiotic people, whose opinions don't matter any more than the opinions of so many deep-sea fish, might think you mercenary! When you and I both knew in our own two souls that you really weren't mercenary in the least! You'd pay me a poor compliment, Will. Isn't it conceivable that a man might love me for myself?"

"You state the case too simply. You make no allowances for the shades and complexities of a man's feelings."

"Bother shades and complexities. Love burns them up. Your shades and complexities are nothing but priggishness and vanity. But there! I'm actually getting angry over a purely supposititious

supposititious question. For, of course, we don't really love each other the least bit, do we, Will?"

He appeared to be giving his whole attention to the rolling of a cigarette; he did not answer. But his fingers trembled, and presently he tore his paper, spilling half the tobacco in his lap.

Johannah watched him from eyes full of languid, half mocking, half pensive laughter.

"Oh, dear, oh, dear," she sighed again, by-and-by.

He looked at her; and he had to catch his breath. Lying there on the turf, the skirts of her frock flowing round her in a sort of little billowy white pool, her head deep in the scarlet cushion, her black hair straying wantonly where it would about her face and brow, her eyes lambent with that lazy, pensive laughter, one of her hands, pink and white, warm and soft, fallen open on the grass between her and her cousin, her whole person seeming to breathe a subtle scent of womanhood, and the luxury and mystery of womanhood—oh, the sight of her, the sense of her, there in the wide green stillness of the summer day, set his heart burning and beating poignantly.

"Oh, dear, oh, dear," she sighed, "I wish the man I *am* in love with were only here."

"Oh! You *are* in love with some one?" he questioned, with a little start.

"Rather!" said she. "In love! I should think so. Oh, I love him, love him, love him. Ah, if he were here! He wouldn't waste this golden afternoon, as you're doing. He'd take my hand—he'd hold it, and press it, and kiss it; and he'd pour his soul out in tumultuous celebration of my charms, in fiery avowals of his passion. If he were here! Ah, me!"

"Where is he?" Will asked, in a dry voice.

"Ah, where indeed? I wish I knew."

"I've

"I've never heard you speak of him before."

"There's none so deaf as he that *will* not hear. I've spoken of him to you at least a thousand times. He forms the staple of my conversation."

"I must be very deaf indeed. I swear this is absolutely news to me."

"Oh, Will, you *are* such a goose—or such a hypocrite," said she. "But it's tea-time. Help me up."

She held out her hand, and he took it and helped her up. But she tottered a little before she got her balance (or made, at least, a feint of doing so), and grasped his hand tight as if to save herself, and all but fell into his arms.

He drew back a step.

She looked straight into his eyes. "You're a goose, and a hypocrite, and a prig, and—a *dear*," she said.

Their tea was served in the garden, and whilst they were dallying over it, a footman brought Johannah a visiting-card.

She glanced at the card; and Will, watching her, noticed that a look of annoyance—it might even have been a look of distress—came into her face.

Then she threw the card on the tea-table, and rose. "I shan't be gone long," she said, and set out for the house.

The card lay plainly legible under the eyes of Will and Madame Dornaye. "Mr. George Aymer, 36 Boulevard Rochechouart" was the legend inscribed upon it.

"*Tiens*," said Madame Dornaye; "Jeanne told me she had ceased to see him."

Will

Will suppressed a desire to ask, "Who is he?"

But Madame Dornaye answered him all the same.

"You have heard of him? He is a known personage in Paris, although English. He is a painter, a painter of great talent; very young, but already decorated. And of a surprising beauty—the face of an angel. With that, a thorough-paced rascal. Oh, yes, whatever is vilest, whatever is basest. Even in Montmartre, even in the corruptest world of Paris, among the lowest journalists and painters, he is notorious for his corruption. Johannah used to see a great deal of him. She would not believe the evil stories that were told about him. And with his rare talent and his beautiful face, he has the most plausible manners, the most winning address. We were afraid that she might end by marrying him. But at last she found him out for herself, and gave him up. She told me she had altogether ceased to see him. I wonder what ill wind blows him here."

Johannah entered the drawing-room.

A man in grey tweeds, the red ribbon of the Legion of Honour gleaming in his buttonhole, was standing near a window: a man, indeed, as Madame Dornaye had described him, with a face of surprising beauty—a fine, clear, open-air complexion, a clean-cut, even profile, a sensitive, soft mouth, big, frank, innocent blue eyes, and waving hair of the palest Saxon yellow. He could scarcely have been thirty; and the exceeding beauty of his face, its beauty and its sweetness, made one overlook his figure, which was a trifle below the medium height, and thick-set, with remarkably square, broad shoulders, and long arms.

Johannah greeted him with some succinctness. "What do you want?" she asked, remaining close to the door.

"I want

"I want to have a talk with you," he answered, moving towards her. He drawled slightly ; his voice was low and soft, conciliatory, caressing almost. And his big blue eyes shone with a faint, sweet, appealing smile.

"Would you mind staying where you are ?" said she. "You can make yourself audible from across the room."

"What are you afraid of ?" he asked, his smile brightening with innocent wonder.

"Afraid ? You do yourself too much honour. One does not like to find oneself in close proximity with objects that disgust one."

He laughed ; but instead of moving further towards her, he dropped into a chair. "You were always brutally outspoken," he murmured.

"Yes ; and with advancing years I've become even more so," said Johannah, who continued to stand.

"You're quite sure, though, that you're not afraid of me ?" he questioned.

"Oh, for that, as sure as sure can be. If you've based any sort of calculations upon the theory that I would be afraid of you, you'll have to throw them over."

He flushed a little, as if with anger ; but in a moment he answered calmly, "I always base my calculations upon certainties. You've come into a perfect pot of money since I last had the pleasure of meeting you."

"Yes, into something like eight thousand a year, if the figures interest you."

"I never had any head for figures. But eight thousand sounds stupendous. And a lovely place, into the bargain. The park, or so much of it as one sees from the avenue, could not be better. And I permitted myself to admire the façade of the house and the view of the sea."

"They're

"They're not bad," Johannah assented.

"It's heart-rending, the way things are shared in this world. Here are you, rich beyond the dreams of avarice, you who have done nothing all your life but take your pleasure; and I, who've toiled like a galley-slave, I remain as poor as any church-mouse. It's monstrous."

Johannah did not answer.

"And now," he went on, "I suppose you've settled down and become respectable? No more Bohemia? No more cakes and ale? Only champagne and truffles? A County Family! Fancy your being a County Family, all by yourself, as it were! You must feel rather like the reformed rake of tradition—don't you!"

"I mentioned that I am not afraid of you," she reminded him, "but that doesn't in the least imply that I find you amusing. The plain truth is, I find you deadly tiresome. If you have anything special to say to me, may I ask you to say it quickly?"

Again he flushed a little; then, again, in a moment, answered smoothly, "I'll say it in a sentence. I've come all the way to England, for the purpose of offering you my hand in marriage." And he raised his bright blue eyes to her face with a look that really was seraphic.

"I decline the offer. If you've nothing further to keep you here, I'll ring to have you shown out."

Still again he flushed, yet once more controlled himself. "You decline the offer! *Allons donc!* When I'm prepared to do the right thing, and make an honest woman of you."

"I decline the offer," Johannah repeated.

"That's foolish of you," said he.

"If you could dream how remotely your opinion interests me, you wouldn't trouble to express it," said she.

His anger this time got the better of him. He scowled, and
looked

looked at her from the corners of his eyes. "You had better not trifle with me," he said in a suppressed voice.

"Oh," said she, "you must suffer me to be the mistress of my own actions in my own house. Now—if you are quite ready to go?" she suggested, putting her hand upon the bell-cord.

"I'm not ready to go yet. I want to talk with you. To cut a long business short, you're rich. I'm pitifully poor. You know how poor I am. You know how I have to live, the hardships, the privations I'm obliged to put up with."

"Have you come here to beg?" Johannah asked.

"No, I've come to appeal to your better nature. You refuse to marry me. That's absurd of you, but—*tant pis!* Whether you marry me or not, you haven't the heart to leave me to rot in poverty, while you luxuriate in plenty. Considering our old-time relations, the thing's impossible on the face of it."

"Ah, I understand. You *have* come here to beg," she said.

"No—to demand," said he. "One begs when one has no power to enforce. When one has the power to enforce, one demands."

"What is the use of these glittering aphorisms?" she asked wearily.

"If you are ready to behave well to me, I'll behave handsomely to you. But if you refuse to recognise my claims upon you, I'm in a position to take reprisals," he said very quietly.

Johannah did not answer.

"I'm miserably, tragically poor; you're rich. At this moment I've not got ten pounds in the world; and I owe hundreds. I've not sold a picture since March. You have eight thousand a year. You can't expect me to sit down under it in silence. As the French attorneys phrase it, *cet état de choses ne peut pas durer.*"

Still Johannah answered nothing.

"You

"You must come to my relief," said he. "You must make it possible for me to go on. If you have any right feeling, you'll do it spontaneously. If not—you know I can compel you."

"Oh, then, for goodness' sake, compel me, and so make an end of this entirely tedious visit."

"I'd immensely rather not compel you. If you will lend me a helping hand from time to time, I'll promise never to take a step to harm you. I shall be moderate. You've got eight thousand a year. You'd never miss a hundred now and then. You might simply occasionally buy a picture. That would be the best way. You might buy my pictures."

"I should be glad to know definitely," remarked Johannah, "whether I have to deal with a blackmailer or a bagman."

"Damn you," he broke out, with sudden savagery, flushing very red indeed.

Johannah was silent.

After a pause, he said, "I'm staying at the inn in the village—at the Silver Arms."

Johannah did not speak.

"I've already scraped acquaintance with the parson," he went on. Then, as she still was silent, "I wonder what would become of your social position in this County if I should have a good long talk about you with the parson."

"To a man of your intelligence, the solution of that problem can present no serious difficulty."

"You admit that your social position would be smashed up?"

"All the king's horses and all the king's men couldn't put it together again."

"I'm glad to find at least that you acknowledge my power."

"You have it in your power to tell people that I was once inconceivably simple enough to believe that you were an honourable

able man, that I once had the inconceivable bad taste to be fond of you. What woman's character could survive *that* revelation?"

"And I could add—couldn't I?—that you once had the inconceivable weakness to become my mistress?"

"Oh, you could add no end of details."

"Well, then?" he questioned.

"Well, then?" questioned she.

"It comes to this, that if you don't want your social position, your reputation, to be utterly smashed up, you must make terms with me."

"It's a little unfortunate, from that point of view, that I shouldn't happen to care a rush about my social position—as you call it."

"I think I'll have a good long talk with the parson."

"Do by all means."

"You'd better be careful. I may take you at your word."

"I wish you would. Take me at my word—and go."

"You mean to say you seriously don't care?"

"Not a rush, not a button."

"Oh, come! You'll never try to brazen the thing out."

"I wish you'd go and have your long talk with the parson."

"I don't understand you."

"I do understand you—perfectly."

"It would be so easy for you to give me a little help."

"It would be so easy for you to 'smash up' my reputation with the parson."

"You never used to be close-fisted. It's incomprehensible that you should refuse me a little help. Look. I'm willing to be more than fair. Give me a hundred pounds, a bare little hundred pounds, and I'll send you a lovely picture."

"Thank you, I don't want a picture."

"You

"You won't give me a hundred pounds—a beggarly hundred pounds?"

"I won't give you a farthing."

"Well, then, by God, you damned, infernal jade," he cried, springing to his feet, his face crimson, "by God, I'll make you. I swear I'll ruin you. Look out!"

"Are you really going at last?" she asked quietly.

"No, I'm not going till it suits my pleasure. You've got a sort of bastard cousin staying here with you, I'm told."

"I would advise you to moderate your tone or your language. If my sort of bastard cousin should by any chance happen to hear you referring to him in those terms, he might not be pleased."

"I want to see him."

"I would advise you not to see him."

"I want to see him."

"If you really wish to see him, I'll send for him. But it's only right to warn you that he's not at all a patient sort of man. If I send for him, he will quite certainly make things extremely disagreeable for you."

"I am not afraid of him. You know well enough that I'm not a coward."

"My cousin is more than a head taller than you are. He would be perfectly able and perfectly sure to kick you. If there's any other possible way of getting rid of you, I'd rather not trouble him."

"I think I had better have a talk with your cousin, as well as with the parson."

"I think you had better confine your attentions to the parson. My cousin wouldn't listen to a word."

"I am going to make a concession," said Aymer. "I'm going to give you a night in which to think this thing over. If you
care

care to send me a note, with a cheque in it, so that I shall receive it at the inn by to-morrow at ten o'clock, I'll take the next earliest train back to town, and I'll send you a picture in return. If no note comes by ten o'clock, I'll call on the parson, and tell him all I know about you ; and I'll write a letter to your cousin. Now, good day."

Johannah rang, and Aymer was shown out.

VI

"I shan't be gone long," Johannah had said, when she left Madame Dornaye and Will at tea in the garden ; but time passed and she did not come back. Will, mounting through various stages and degrees of nervousness, restlessness, anxiety, at last said, "What on earth can be keeping her ?" and Madame Dornaye replied, "That is precisely what I am asking myself." They waited a little longer, and then, "Shall we go back to the house ?" he suggested. But when they reached the house, they found the drawing-room empty, and—no trace of Johannah.

"She may be in her room. I'll go and see," said Madame Dornaye.

More time passed, and still no Johannah. Nor did Madame Dornaye return to explain her absence.

Will walked about in a state of acute misery. What could it be ? What could have happened ? What could this painter, this George Aymer, this thorough-paced rascal with the beautiful face, this man of whom Johannah, in days gone by, "had seen a great deal," so that her friends had feared "she might end by marrying him"—what could he have called upon her for ? What could have passed between them ? Why had she disappeared ?

Where

Where was she now? Where was he? Where was Madame Dornaye, who had gone to look for her? Could—could it possibly be—that he—this man notorious for his corruption even in the corruptest world of Paris—could it be that he was the man Johannah meant when she had talked of the man she was in love with? And Will, fatuous imbecile, had vainly allowed himself to imagine. . . . Oh, why did she not come back? What *could* be keeping her away from him all this time? . . . “I have had a hundred, I have had a hundred.” The phrase echoed and echoed in his memory. She had said, “I have had a hundred love affairs.” Oh, to be sure, in the next breath, she had contradicted herself, she had said, “No, I haven’t.” But she had added, “Everybody has had at least one.” So she had had at least one. With this man, George Aymer? Madame Dornaye said she had broken with him, ceased to see him. But—it was certain she had seen him to-day. But—lovers’ quarrels are made up; lovers break with each other, and then come together again, are reunited. . . . Perhaps . . . Perhaps . . . Oh, where was she? Why did she remain away in this mysterious fashion? What could she be doing? What could she be doing?

The dressing-bell rang, and he went to dress for dinner.

“Anyhow, I shall see her now, I shall see her at dinner,” he kept telling himself, as he dressed.

But when he came downstairs the drawing-room was still empty. He walked backwards and forwards.

“We shall have to dine without our hostess,” Madame Dornaye said, entering presently. “Jeanne has a bad headache, and will stay in her room.”

VII

Will left the house early the next morning, and went out into the garden. The sun was shining, the dew sparkled on the grass, the air was keen and sweet with the odours of the earth. A mile away the sea glowed blue as larkspur ; and overhead innumerable birds gaily piped and twittered. But oh, the difference, the difference ! His eyes could see no colour, his ears could hear no music. His brain felt as if it had been stretched and strained, like a thing of india-rubber ; a lump ached in his throat ; his heart was abject and sick with the suspense of waiting, with the futile questionings, the fears, suspicions, the dreading hopes, that had beset and tortured it throughout the night.

"Will !" Johannah's voice called behind him.

He turned.

"Thank God !" the words came without conscious volition on his part. "I thought I was never going to see you again."

"I have been waiting for you," said she.

She wore her garden-hat and her white frock ; but her face was pale, and her eyes looked dark and anxious.

He had taken her hand, and was clinging to it, pressing it, hard, so hard that it must have hurt her, in the violence of his emotion.

"Oh, wait, Will, wait," she said, trying to draw her hand away ; and her eyes filled with sudden tears.

He let go her hand, and looked into her tearful eyes, helpless, speechless, longing to speak, unable, in the confusion of his thoughts and feelings, to find a word.

"I must tell you something, Will. Come with me somewhere—where we can be alone. I must tell you something."

She moved off, away from the house, he keeping beside her.

They passed out of the garden, into the deep shade of the park.

"Do you remember," she began, all at once, "do you remember what I said yesterday, about my motto? That my motto was 'Be bold, be bold, and everywhere be bold'?"

"Yes," he said.

"I am going to be very bold indeed now, Will. I am going to tell you something—something that will make you hate me perhaps—that will make you despise me perhaps."

"You could not possibly tell me anything that could make me hate you or despise you. But you must not tell me anything at all, unless it is something you are perfectly sure you will be happier for having told me."

"It is something I wish to tell you, something I must tell you," said she. Then, after a little pause, "Oh, how shall I begin it?" But before he could have spoken, "Do you think that a woman—do you think that a girl, when she is very young, when she is very immature and impressionable, and very impulsive, and ignorant, and when she is alone in the world, without a father or mother—do you think that if she makes some terrible mistake, if she is terribly deceived, if somebody whom she believes to be good and noble and unhappy and misunderstood, somebody whom she—whom she loves—do you think that if she makes some terrible mistake—if she—if she—oh, my God!—if——" She held her breath for a second, then suddenly, "Can't you understand what I *mean*?" she broke down in a sort of wail, and hid her face in her hands, and sobbed.

Will stood beside her, holding his arms out towards her. "Johannah! Johannah!" was all he could say.

She dropped her hands, and looked at him with great painful eyes. "Tell me—do you think that a woman can never be forgiven?"

given? Do you think that she is soiled, degraded, changed utterly? Do you think that when she—that when she did what she did—it was a sin, a crime, not only a terrible mistake, and that her whole nature is changed by it? Most people think so. They think that a mark has been left upon her, branded upon her; that she can never, never be the same again. Do you think so, Will? Oh, it is not true; I know it is not true. A woman can leave that mistake, that terror, that horror—she can leave it behind her as completely as she can leave any other dreadful thing. She can blot it out of her life, like a nightmare. She *isn't* changed—she remains the same woman. She isn't utterly changed, and soiled, and defiled. In her own conscience, no matter what other people think, she knows, she knows she isn't. When she wakes up to find that the man she had believed in, the man she had loved, when she wakes up to find that he isn't in any way what she had thought him, that he is base and evil and ignoble, and when all her love for him dies in horror and misery—oh, do you think that she must never, never, as long as she lives, hold up her head again, never be happy again, never love any one again? Look at me, Will. I am myself. I am what God made me. Do you think that I am utterly vile because—because——” But her voice failed again, and her eyes again filled with tears.

“Oh, Johannah, don't ask me what I think of you. I could not tell you what I think of you. You are as God made you. God never made—never made any one else so splendid.”

And in a moment his arms were round her, and she was weeping her heart out on his shoulder.

The Ghost Bereft

By E. Nesbit

THE poor ghost came through the wind and rain
And passed down the old dear road again ;

Thin cowered the hedges, the tall trees swayed
Like little children that shrink afraid.

The wind was wild and the night was late
When the poor ghost came to the garden gate ;

Dank were the flower-beds, heavy and wet,
The weeds stood up where the rose was set.

The wind was angry, the rain beat sore
When the poor ghost came to its own house-door :

“ And shall I find her a-weeping still
To think how alone I lie, and chill ?

“ Or shall I find her happy and warm
With her dear head laid on a new love’s arm ?

“ Or

"Or shall I find she has learned to pine
For another's love and not for mine ?

"Whatever chance, I have this to my store—
She is mine—my own for evermore."

So the poor ghost came through the wind and rain
Till it reached the square bright window pane.

"Oh ! what is here in the room so bright—
Roses and love and a hid delight ?

"What lurks in the silence that fills the room ?
A cypress wreath from a dead man's tomb ?

"What wakes, what sleeps ? Ah ! can it be
Her heart that is breaking—and not for me ?"

Then the poor ghost looked through the window pane,
Though all the glass was wrinkled with rain.

"Oh, there is light—at the feet and head
Twelve tall tapers about the bed.

"Oh, there are flowers, white flowers and rare,
But not the garland a bride may wear.

"Jasmine white, and a white, white rose—
But its scent is gone where the lost dream goes.

"Lilies laid on the straight white bier,
But the room is empty—she is not here.

"Her

The Ghost Bereft

* " Her body lies here deserted, cold ;
And the body that loved it creeps in the mould.

" Was there ever an hour when my love, set free,
Would not have hastened and come to me ?

" Can the soul that loved mine long ago
Be hence and away and I not know ?

" Oh, then, God's judgment is on me sore
For I have lost her for evermore ! "

And the poor ghost fared through the wind and the rain
To its own appointed place again.

But up in Heaven, where memories cease
Because the blessed have won to peace,

One pale saint shivered, and closer wound
The shining raiment that wrapped her round :

" Oh glad is Heaven, and glad am I,
Yet I fain would remember the days gone by :

" The past is hid and I may not know—
But I think there was sorrow long ago.

" The sun of Heaven is warm and bright,
But I think there is rain on the earth to-night :

" O Christ, because of thine own sore pain,
Help all poor souls in the wind and rain ! "

Three Reflections

By Stanley V. Makower

I—The Actor

THE dominoes clattered upon the marble tables of the Café Royal, and the steady brilliance of the lights shed a glow over the cloud-girt goddesses that grinned and beckoned in bewildering deshabille from the ceiling. The long, gilded room was crowded with people and with the images of people reflected in its numerous glass panels.

My companion and I sat without speaking, satisfied to rest ; for the day had been tiring, and outside the wind was cold, and the rain had beat upon our faces like little cold pellets of lead.

Directly behind us sat a young man who was swaying his body to and fro in so strange a manner that I shuddered, as if in a nightmare, when we are oppressed with the continuous fear that a calamity must happen . . . in a moment, . . . at this moment . . . now . . . and that calamity never happens. Finally the young man lay half across the velvet-cushioned seat, motionless. A glass of coffee stood before him on the table, untasted, with the spoon in it.

Suddenly the head waiter came up, shook him roughly by the shoulders, and said :

“ You

"You mustn't do that."

"Do what?" he asked, wearily.

"Lie about the seats here," replied the other gruffly, and he moved away, perplexed by the sobriety of the speaker's voice, and the strangeness of his conduct. I heard the young man grumble something, and then he put his arms on the table, and his head fell into his hands. So he remained motionless throughout the evening, while the steam rose quickly from the coffee before him, almost as if it were in a hurry to leave the glass.

Satisfied that this was not the moment for the arrival of the catastrophe with which the air seemed pregnant, I dismissed the young man from my thoughts with the meditation that he might either have shot himself, or had a death struggle with the head waiter, but that as he had done neither he was there, just as they so often are in nightmares, to put me off the scent. When you have dreamed much you become wary, and acquire skill in detecting the sham bogies with which a nightmare is peopled, until the figure-head appears, unmistakable, indomitable, malignant, insolent, because clothed with the irresistible power to terrify. You are swiftly conscious that *this* is the director and controller of catastrophes, and that the time for contemptuous ridicule and laughter is over. You break into a low propitiatory prayer. The figure raises a gigantic arm, . . . and then, if Heaven is merciful, you wake in a cold perspiration.

The young man, then, was a sham bogey, and I looked round me to detect the figure-head among the assembled company.

Opposite us sat a middle-aged man with a sandy moustache, who was eating ravenously, fiercely. He chased the pieces over his plate with his fork, and swallowed without masticating. Occasionally he glanced round, and pulled the salt or mustard towards his plate with a brusque, almost angry gesture. At the
table

table next to him sat an older man, with grey head and beard, and thick eyebrows under which were handsome grey eyes. He was glancing casually at a newspaper.

I began to marvel at the contrast between the two men, to picture to myself a thousand scenes to illustrate the calm, placid temperament of the one, the nervous irritability of the other. I let the two figures wander down the vistas of my imagination, and stared blankly in front of me, till the whole scene of the crowded room with its glare of light faded away, and I saw the grey-headed man seated in an armchair in a comfortable, ugly house, telling a fairy tale to three or four little children, whose mother was knitting by the fireside. She was rather pretty, but very frail, and there were light silken curls over her pale forehead. And just when the grey-headed man had reached the climax of his story, I thought, Heaven knows why, that he stopped short, and fixed his eyes upon one of the children, and, amidst cries of "Go on, daddy, do go on," said: "The good fairy never goes on telling stories to little boys whose finger-nails are dirty," and I saw a little boy look sheepishly at his little hands; but before I could go on constructing my picture I was seized with a doubt as to what had made the grey-headed man suddenly so severe, and I came to the conclusion that it was probably because he did not know how the story ended that he suddenly noticed the little boy's dirty finger-nails. And the thought of this amused me so much, that my fancy stopped, and I found myself looking again at the two men before me in the long, bright café, and the smoke of a cigarette, which the grey-headed man was smoking, floated under my nostrils, and the dominoes clattered again in various parts of the room, and I heard the babble of innumerable voices.

By this time the nightmare had passed from me, and I felt much surprise and curiosity when I observed that the two men
were

were talking to each other. The grey-headed man was holding the newspaper a little way from him as he listened to the other, who, while diligently pursuing his food across his plate, threw out a sentence here and there with the same irregular brusquerie as he had displayed when he pulled the salt or mustard towards him. When he had ejaculated a few words he seemed to return to his food with greater voracity than ever, and cut it about savagely.

"I never read a newspaper," he said; it's such a damn waste of time. One might be eating or drinking all the while."

The other murmured a feeble protest. He looked as if he were absolutely incapable of understanding that sort of man. His face expressed a disapproval which was at once polite, tolerant, and perplexed.

"Waste of time," repeated the fierce man; and then rather louder, "Waste of time!" and he subsided into his plate, which clinked with the blows of his knife and fork. When he had swept it absolutely bare he threw them both into it, pushed it from him, and said: "The food's beastly."

The old man smiled pleasantly.

"You can get a good dinner at about two places in London, and I'm sick of both of them. Here it's beastly, I tell you."

"Why come here?" asked the other mildly.

"Why come here?" he retorted quickly. "Why? Ha! ha! Why, indeed! A very good question."

But he made no attempt to answer it.

"You can't get a decent La Rose here," he went on, and there was an almost piteous ring in his voice. "Their wines taste as if they'd been bottled in a sewer. I had a wine last week at the Café Rouge. That was a queenly wine, sir, queenly," he said, as if you could not find a more beautifully appropriate epithet. "I say it was queenly, and I think I know a good wine. I was
once

once wine-taster to our club, the Corsican, sir—and they had a devilish good cook, I may tell you. Well, sir, I tasted twenty-two glasses of champagne in the dark, and they didn't stump me over a single vintage. What's more, just before they turned up the gas Tommy Webster gave me a mixed glass, sir, and I told him the three different years of which it was made up," and he thumped the table so that the plates and glasses jumped and shivered. Then he looked defiantly at his neighbour, who, somewhat confused, murmured: "Dear, dear, you surprise me."

"When I was acting in Hull, sir," he went on, suddenly, "there was a devilish pretty girl in our company. Her name was Tremaine, sir—Kitty Tremaine. We used to act together twenty years ago." He passed his hand over his face. "Do you know the Golden Mermaid?" he continued. "No, I suppose you don't. It's the oldest hotel in Hull. We all went there one summer afternoon after we'd given a morning performance of Hamlet, and in the garden of that hotel, sir, I drank the finest champagne I ever tasted in my life. We sat round a table under a large tree. We were all very tired. I had been playing Polonius, a Captain, and most of the Prince of Denmark; and Kitty Tremaine was Ophelia, sir. I'm spinning you no yarn. I remember how many of us there were; just eight. And the Queen kept on her stage dress, as it was cooler for her, and we had to play again in the evening. Ophelia had left some flowers in her hair, too," and his voice grew thick with emotion.

"Well, we drank four bottles of that champagne, sir," he added, with the air of a man who has been led into a pleasing digression and returns to his subject with a wrench. "And in between the bottles we danced round the tree. We got a fiddler to fiddle for us, and we brought out the hostess, and we sang a chorus."

He

He was growing more and more excited, and, as he spoke, waved his arms in imitation of a dance.

"And I made it up with the Queen, sir, over a glaas of that champagne. She said she knew I never meant badly all the time. No more I did. I never could see what there was against the Queen. And so we kissed while we were dancing and made friends, although in a couple of hours we had to begin quarrelling again to please the people. And when the others were tired I did my great speech at the end of the second act, and everybody clapped, and said I was sure to make a fortune. Sure to make a fortune," he repeated, contemptuously, piteously, with a little laugh at himself.

The grey-headed man sat listening now without venturing to interrupt the speaker with any remarks of his own.

"What a beautiful Ophelia she was, sir. You never saw a finer arm. It reminded one of Siddons'. Only it was finer, sir, I say finer," he went on, as if fearing a protest. "Ophelia, I did love you once," he added, more calmly, as he made a mock gesture of devotion to his neighbour.

"I always considered the conduct of the Prince most reprehensible. Perhaps you won't believe me when I tell you that it was with great difficulty, very great difficulty, that I could ever be persuaded to act that part."

He pronounced the word "very" impressively, and as if it were spelt vai-ree.

"You have no idea what unfeeling people managers are, and my nature has always been a sensitive one. Redmayne, our manager, was as cold as a stone, sir. No more humanity than a rock, sir, or—or the leg of this table," he added, trying to enforce the truth of his statement by the use of an illustration close to hand from which the other could not escape.

"I was

"I was nearly turned out of that company, sir, because I refused to spout some lines that were brutal, and that no gentleman could allow himself to use. I never could play a villain. It cut me to the quick, sir."

The actor was growing tired with his own loquacity, and the grey-headed man was drawing more and more into his shell. He was attempting, ineffectually, to slip the newspaper between himself and the speaker without attracting his notice. But every time that he made an advance of a few inches in lifting the paper from the table the other gave a fresh emphasis to what he was saying, and fixed the offender with his sharp, restless eyes.

In the middle of a long speech about a play called "Vendetta," in which he had acted the part of the King of Naples for fourteen hundred nights until he "really felt the part so much, sir, that it was a struggle for me to leave my palace on the stage, and climb up five flights of stairs to my humble lodging in the town——" He broke off abruptly, and then, waving his hand theatrically, began to declaim with an abundance of false emphasis :

"Indeed this counsellor

Is now most still, most secret, and most grave,

Who always was a foolish prating knave.

Come sir, to draw toward an end with you."

I had risen to go, but stood irresolutely watching the stagey magnificence of his address to the grey-headed man, and enjoying the grand ineptitude with which he delivered the last line, with its absurd pause on the word "end," which he almost shouted across the table.

He turned aside to wave his hand in parting salutation to the Queen, and closed the scene with the words "Good-night, mother," in the accents of which lingered the tone of false tragedy
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in which he had recited the lines. But before the last syllable had fallen from his lips a change came over his face, one of those changes that reveal the intrusion of an unexpected emotion into the mind of the speaker, an emotion that sweeps everything before it.

The wave of the hand died away, and the arm fell a little helplessly to his side. All the fierceness fled from his face, and into his eyes came an almost despairing look mingled with one of fear, as if a shadow had suddenly risen by his side. With the articulation of those two words some undercurrent of his life rose to the top and drowned his self-assurance so that he sat there broken, transfigured, silent. And whereas before he had seemed only sordid, tawdry, fugitive, he was now exalted, inexplicable, eternal, touched to beauty by the stroke of humanity which had felled him.

As we made our way to the street I could scarcely believe that this was the same man. Behind the seat which we had left sat the young man, motionless as before, with his head in his hands, conspicuous amid the bustle and movement that was round him. In the corner of the room two Spaniards were quarrelling over a game of chess.

Who shall guess what chained the youth's head to his hands? Shall a man presume to explain what made the Spaniards to quarrel, or why that garrulous actor was struck dumb? And how came it that for many days and nights I was haunted by this fragment of the actor's rambling speech, "Ophelia had left some flowers in her hair too"?

II—The Countess

Do you know these moments? When you have come home from a dance, or a dinner, at some house where there have been crowds of people, and much talk and laughter and noise. You enter your solitary room and all is perfectly still and dark, and it seems to you that the rest of the world are moving, growing older, suffering the pain of life to eat them up slowly but surely. Men whom you have known as boys are grey-headed, and talk of their youth as a thing divine, lighted by the halo of a dead past. Women whom you have seen young and fair and merry are old and unlovely: the light of romance has died from their eyes, and their vanity sits upon their faces like a scar.

It was at such a moment as this that I stood lost in a melancholy wonder with the match against the matchbox, hesitating to strike, reluctant to dissipate the sweet pain of the emotion by the flare of the tiny torch which should reveal with dim certainty the familiar objects in my sitting-room, when I heard a prolonged trumpeting sound from the floor below which it was impossible to mistake. For it was the sound of somebody blowing a nose.

However disposed I might have been to ignore the origin of such a sound, to clothe it in a fancy more in accordance with the poetry of my mood, I was not permitted to indulge in any such alluring illusion, for the sound was twice reiterated, each time with growing emphasis and sonority, and with the irresistible conviction that it came from a nose, and a very powerful nose too, I lighted my candle, hurried into the next room and went to bed.

The next morning being anxious to know who occupied the floor below I inquired of the servant, and was told that it was
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"the Countess." When I went on to ask what her name was my curiosity met with a check, for the girl answered, "Oh, she 'ave a lot of names she do," which I took as a well-merited rebuke for the impertinence of the question.

During the week, however, I learned two important facts. One was that the name of the Countess was Cunégonde de Blum de Cavagnac, by which she was addressed in full on the envelopes of all her letters, which sometimes lay on the hall table, sometimes on the top of a coal scuttle that had strayed into the staircase, and sometimes on a plaster statue of the Queen, which stands on a bracket on the first floor landing, and seems to me to look particularly peevish and ill-tempered whenever it is crowned with a letter addressed to the Countess. On most of the envelopes the name took up two lines, and I can only remember one in which the Cavagnac was included in the first line, and then it wriggled down the side in lame, helpless fashion.

The other fact that I learned was that the Countess had large feet, for on coming home rather late one evening I passed her shoes which keep sentinel at her door, and observed that they gaped a good deal, and that they were larger than my own.

Apart from the fact that she would blow her nose in an aggressive way, there was only one trick of the Countess which stirred in me a feeling of animosity. This was her habit of retiring punctually at eleven o'clock, and slamming her door violently and then locking it with as much noise as she could. This conduct seemed to me defiant, almost polemical. An ill-natured person might go further and stigmatise it as forward.

But I had my revenge, for one evening at five minutes to eleven I went into my bedroom and slammed my door and locked it and unlocked it and relocked it some six or seven times, then waited breathlessly to see what she would do, and on the whole I

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am disposed to look upon what followed as an apology. At a few minutes past eleven o'clock she retired, slamming her door rather less violently, I thought, than usual, and it was quite a quarter of an hour before the door was locked, and then it was locked very gently. On the other hand she must have blown her nose at least seven or eight times, for many times when I was just dropping to sleep I was awakened by the stern notes.

The next evening, as I returned late, she had already retired, and finding a dead narcissus on the staircase I dropped it into the gulf of one of her shoes on my way to the top floor, hoping that she might look upon the offering as a sign of peace between us.

At about this time I noticed that the servant began to allude very frequently, and always in a tone of irony, to the Countess, and from her manner I perceived that unless I myself were to invite her confidence, the day would come when she would no longer be able to contain herself, and a storm of communications would rain upon my head. Knowing from former experience of lodging-house servants that the storm, when it burst, would be a fierce one, I thought it wise to ask a few questions about the Countess before the store of the girl's information should become too vast to be any longer contained.

I was not mistaken in my surmise of the situation ; for I had barely opened my mouth upon the subject when Sarah (for of course the servant's name was Sarah) declared first that the Countess was a funny woman, and before I could remember any instances of wittiness in her conduct, that she was a beastly woman. She went on to explain, with masterly inconsequence, that she was very rich, a Roman *Catholic*, only ate bread and butter for dinner, and without a shadow of a doubt was wrong in her head. When I asked what led to her belief, she replied that

the Countess rose at unearthly hours in the morning to go and pray, and that she always insisted on having a jug of hot water before leaving the house ; which of course necessitated Sarah's rising at unearthly hours, though I should not think that it caused her to pray, to judge from the language in which she alluded to the matter when we were talking it over together.

She admitted that the Countess gave heaps of money to the poor, but very rightly observed that before indulging in luxuries of this kind it was only a duty to "live decent yourself." She said that she had no patience with such a woman, and at the same time gave me to understand that she was putting the Countess through a course of training by which she might with time acquire that virtue herself, for she made it a rule never to answer her bell until it had rung half-a-dozen times or more.

This was information which I might have assumed from my own experience of Sarah's character ; so I hastened to lead her to a department of the matter which should be more fruitful of interest to me. I asked her whether the Countess was really a religious woman, and was told with many contemptuous comments that she mumbled and muttered about her room a great deal, and spent a great deal of her time with a certain Father Sebastian, also that she "made up something dreadful, which I'd be ashamed to do if I called myself a Christian." The final taunt, for which I had been waiting, consisted in the remark that she was only a foreign woman after all, and what could you expect ?

I was glad of the enlightened view which I was thus enabled to take of the Countess, and after ascertaining that she might be fifty, but that she heaped such clouds of powder upon her face that it was impossible to tell what she really looked like, my curiosity was appeased, and I resolved to banish the Countess from my thoughts. Taking everything into consideration, I was glad that
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it had not yet fallen to my lot to look upon her. I had come to regard her as one of the innumerable fragments of life with which our minds are peopled: she was a lodging-house myth, and I was not going to seek behind appearances for a meaning which might turn the myth into a mere sordid piece of actuality.

While I was resting in the enjoyment of this belief, I had occasion to seek an interview with the landlady on the subject of my weekly bill, and in the course of conversation we chanced upon the topic of servants. To my surprise, for in my mind I had always bestowed upon Sarah the sole virtue of honesty, she informed me that the girl was a most unscrupulous liar, of whom she hoped very shortly to be rid. The statement troubled me, because my myth was in danger. What after all if the Countess Cunégonde de Blum de Cavagnac were really a perfectly ordinary intelligible person? What if the allegation that she made up was untrue? What if she really did pray earnestly and devoutly, and denied herself the bare necessities of life to benefit the poor? What if the time spent with Father Sebastian was all devoted to pious confession?

No doubt I had wronged her, mentally only—but still. . . . Ought I not to have taken care to prevent my imagination running away with me? After all, could you not hear from her long imperious knock at the door that she belonged to an old and aristocratic French family? How could I have been so blind as to be misled by the chatter of a servant, whose honesty I was foolish enough never to suspect? But then, what if the landlady lied? That was also possible, and yet . . .

I was in an agony of suspense over the matter, when a new episode occurred. One evening there was much confusion on the floor below: the opening and shutting of innumerable doors, the sound of voices, and of hurrying footsteps. On inquiring the
cause

cause of the disturbance the next morning, I was told that the Countess was taken ill, and Sarah added, by way of contemptuous explanation, that she had "under eaten herself."

I remained silent, not knowing how much to believe, and how much to disbelieve. "Cruel liar," I thought to myself. "Perhaps the poor lady is dying, while you are rending her character," and I felt half inclined to send in some jelly from Gunter's with my compliments. But I refrained, thinking it wiser to allow events to shape themselves.

On the third day after the Countess was taken ill, as I sat writing at my window one morning, a handsome phaeton and pair drove up our humble street and stopped at our door. It was driven by a tall, well-dressed man of about thirty, by whose side sat a pretty little girl of thirteen or fourteen.

I heard the window below mine opened, and the gentleman who was driving shouted in a clear, pleasant voice, "*Ça va mieux ?*" And then I heard the reply from below, "*Mieux, merci,*" and the window was closed again, and the phaeton drove off.

"She does belong to an old and aristocratic French family," I thought to myself, remorsefully, and I tried to remember some historical peg upon which to hang the Cavagnacs; but though I was quite certain I had come across the name in my journeys through the French historians, I could not place it, and sat wondering, cursing my own forgetfulness.

The morning was fair and clear, and the sun shone peacefully upon the opposite houses, with their tufts of trees and shrubs beginning to sprout. But the dismal succession of five notes on a harmonium which had gone on droning ever since eight o'clock drew nearer, and I laid down my pen in despair to wait till the noise had passed. The fairness of the weather tempted me to open the window.

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I leaned out, and watched the characteristic movement of the street, the handful of tiny boys playing and squabbling among each other, the girl wandering about idly in the large garden opposite my window, now disappearing, now emerging from behind a screen of trees. Then my eye fell below upon the balcony beneath my window, and I saw a very strange sight.

A lady with bare arms, and a loose black gauze thrown round her shoulders, was standing with her head bent forward and all her hair down. It hung in loose, damp strips from round a bald patch in the middle of her head, upon which it was my ill fortune to gaze. While she held the gauze across her shoulders with one hand, with the other she was frantically waving a bright scarlet Japanese fan backwards and forwards against her wet hair.

The strangeness of the sight restored my temper, and I blessed the harmonium that had disturbed me in my work. Had it not been for those five dismal notes, I should never have opened the window, never have been permitted to enjoy the novelty of beholding my *Cunégonde* for the first time in so grotesque a situation. My wounded conscience was healed. I could now from personal observation take my own view of the Countess, and dispense with the second-hand versions of the landlady and Sarah.

My first feelings were those of gratitude to the Countess for providing me with so unexpected an apparition. I then began to reason with myself as to what might be inferred from it. Obviously there was nothing abnormal in even a Countess washing her head and drying her hair in the sun, nor was it a very profound guide to her character.

And then the complexity of my thought grew clear, and all my difficulties melted away as a breath from a glass. My landlady's view and Sarah's view were only charming irrelevancies, which had

had momentarily obscured my view of the Countess as a lodging-house myth. The vision on the balcony restored my Cunégonde to the proper place in my mind. And I trust that no future view of her will ever again tempt me to build an incomplete whole out of a complete fragment, nor can any one persuade me that real people, and especially Countesses, ever dry their hair with Japanese fans upon balconies in the early morning of a fine spring day.

III—The General

(Dedicated to H——)

How I first saw him it would be impossible to tell, because by this time he has become a sacred institution ; nor is it possible to imagine a period of my life when the General did not exist.

All the foundations of the Constitution might be done away, Empires might crumble, and Monarchs topple on their thrones, but so long as I was left in undisturbed possession of my General, I do sincerely believe that I should remain calm, because as I never read a newspaper, and have not gone out for the last ten years there is no reason to suppose that these events should come to my knowledge ; and my friends have too much respect for my view of life ever to communicate to me news which I am bound to regard as irrelevant.

When I say that I never read a newspaper, I am not speaking the truth, because I do read a newspaper every morning of my life ; but it is always the same newspaper, and I never read more than half a column, and it is always the same half-column. I
have

have had that newspaper on my table ever since I took possession of my house, and it has turned to quite a rich yellow colour.

Nothing has ever been written in a daily newspaper that was not written in another daily newspaper of an earlier date. Cards were invented to amuse a mad king, and newspapers to amuse his mad subjects, because no sane person can want to go on reading a daily record of the universal imbecilities of people in office and people just out of office, people married and people divorced, of performances that are going to take place and performances that have taken place, weather that was wet and is going to be fine.

But I telescope from one digression into another, and so will seek to trace my way back through the half-column of the newspaper that I do read to the General who is a sacred institution.

It is now many years since I lived in a lodging. My mode of life has changed. Fate has cast me into a house in the Cromwell Road, and I have become so incorporate with this house that it seems to me as if I had never lived anywhere else, and the experiences of my past life are no more to me than a string of pretty tales. I have developed a kind of long religion for myself within the walls of my house, and the General is a kind of high priest.

Every morning, as soon as I have breakfasted, I read my little half-column earnestly, devoutly, and with a fresh sense of gratitude. It is headed "Singular Affair in the Caucasus," and is an account of a small Russian peasant woman who climbed upon the roof of a very tall church with three little children. When she had reached the highest part of the building, she proceeded to carefully undress each child in the full light of the sun, and threw them one by one on to the sharp spires that rose below her. Of course they were instantly killed, and when she had thus used all the pieces
in

in her game, she proceeded to undress herself, and then jumped after her children, and was killed too.

With the exception of the heading, and the observation that there was a growing population of insane people in these districts who were constantly acting in this fashion, there is no further comment on the occurrence.

To me this has always seemed the noblest conception of destruction that a human creature has ever devised, and the madness of this Russian peasant woman seems to have had something in it akin to the divine. Her selection of the church suggests that she carried out her intention with the earnestness and solemnity of purpose of one celebrating a religious rite. Her undressing her children and herself before dying, seems to me to have been a kind of symbolical renunciation of the things of the world. Then comes the violent, self-imposed destruction—death in an act of calm, deliberate revolt. All the tiny chains that hold man to life are flooded and wrecked by an ocean of desire for an annihilation of self. Could anything be nobler, simpler?

To read this account, then, is one of the daily tasks of my life and to ponder and gather fresh truths from it. What has it to do with the General? Why, only this: that when I look up from my newspaper across the road, my eye always falls, and has fallen ever since I can remember, upon the bay window of a tall, grey, corner house, and more often than not, I have seen an old, white-haired, purple-faced man standing by a wire cage with a parrot in it, and fiercely stroking a long white moustache.

As I have already said, I can remain perfectly calm under a change of Government, or a war in China, or a sensational murder outside the radius of the parish, but I confess that life would be robbed of one of its few attractions for me were that corner house to change hands. More than that, the alteration of a single piece
of

of furniture in his room would be sufficient to cause me serious discomfort.

When I am in a depressed state of mind, I always begin to think what on earth I should do if, for instance, the parrot were to die. That the General should die, is, of course, a wild impossibility, which I have never seriously contemplated. But it might easily happen that the parrot should catch a chill, or, what is more likely, that a new servant should come and displace the furniture.

Curiously enough, I have never seen a servant in the room during the whole course of my observation. In fact, the only woman who occasionally lightens the dingy, dusty-looking room with her presence is a relation of the General, a sallow-faced, tired-looking young woman of about thirty, who comes to stay with him from time to time for periods of a week.

I believe she is his daughter, the only one of his children with whom he has not finally quarrelled, because, from a general impression which some years' observation has enabled me to gather of the household, I am quite convinced that he had many children, and that he never could get on with any of them. Even the girl who takes pity on him now that he is old, though by no means infirm, as I shall soon show, must have married against his wishes, for she never comes with her husband, as you might expect, and she never stays for more than a week.

The General stays all day in the front room, except when he eats, and then he retires to a room at the back of the house, where my eyes are prevented from following him.

The General does read the newspaper, and a different one every morning, because he betrays emotions which vary according to the news. He sits at the back of the room in a large armchair, smoking and reading.

Once

Once I saw him crunch up the newspaper in a paroxysm of rage, and jump up out of his chair, knocking over a photograph on the table to my infinite distress, for, from my side of the way, I had studied that photograph for years, and it had become as much one of my household gods as I knew it was one of his.

What it was that annoyed him I don't know, but he strode about the room, and at last came to the window, and his eyes looked as if they would hop out of their sockets right over the way to where I sat in a condition of abject terror.

He pulled his moustache so fiercely that any other moustache would have come off under the tension, and to my disordered imagination his moustache seemed to grow in length, so as to sweep two-thirds of the way round the bay window.

Every now and then he cast a savage side-glance at the parrot, which was swinging impertinently within its cage and winking; yes, I declare that I saw it myself, winking at him.

I saw his lips move quickly and both his arms wrathfully raised, and I shuddered and turned quite sick with fear. A mist came over my eyes. I could look no more: in another instant the cage would lie in twisted fragments on the floor and the bird's brains would bespatter the ceiling. . . .

When I had recovered myself sufficiently to look again I found he was at the other end of the room, reverently setting the photograph in its old place upon the table, and spasmodically shaking his head, which glowed like a hot coal.

Thank Heaven! the parrot was comfortably crawling up his cage upside down, and the photograph was intact, and so I could once more look upon the little picture which did not look larger than a five-shilling piece from my window. It was the half-length portrait of a young lady in evening dress, cut square, with a feather trimming running round the edge of the bodice, and she
had

had a fuzzy head of hair ; to all of which details, though I suppose I must have guessed at them, I am ready to swear.

Who the lady was of course I do not know, but that she was a person much adored by the General is obvious from his conduct on the occasion to which I have alluded, and she certainly was not in the least like the daughter whom he hated less cordially than his other children, and who came from time to time to stay with him.

She looked a long-suffering young woman, and had a very hard time of it whenever she stayed with her father, because of his ungovernable temper. For instance, I would dimly discern the two figures seated at the back of the room, apparently engaged in conversation, when there would suddenly be an upheaval of the furniture, a tumultuous confusion, of which I was vaguely aware from my place of observation, and then the girl would wander away from him to the window and look out ruefully upon the row of dull grey houses opposite, with their uniform air of sordid respectability. She would stand and watch the people pass under the window, the carts and carriages roll by, and sometimes she would rub her finger upon the dust-covered glass and make patterns on it.

But she was never allowed to indulge her resentment for long, for out of the darkness would emerge the prancing figure of the General, who would bear swiftly down upon her and re-open the argument until she fled into another part of the room.

Not very long ago I observed with great anxiety that the General did not appear as usual in his sitting-room, and I had to content myself with watching the parrot, whose gymnastics and whose cold insolent yellow eye began to wear sadly upon my nerves. Evidently the General was in bed, and, curiously enough, his bedroom was not on the floor above his sitting-room, but at the top of his house.

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I have often fancied him climbing up, and puffing at each step, damning those infernal staircases, and asking questions which he did not intend to be answered, then mildly subsiding into a growl of "puffickly redicklerse."

Why he slept at the top of the house I cannot for the life of me imagine, and what he did with so large a house all by himself was another mystery. The drawing-room floor was shut up and the blinds all drawn, and so it has been ever since I can remember, so that the outside of the house presents a very strange appearance. There is the basement and ground-floor, in which is the sitting-room, with the parrot in the window, round which are tall, dirty, bedraggled muslin curtains; then comes the blind-drawn array of windows in the next three floors, that seem to shroud from my vision some ghost which the General has locked out of sight; and then, right at the top, comes an array of smaller windows, hung with little frilled curtains of spotted muslin that was once white, but has never been anything but a faint grey as far back as my memory will take me. These must be the windows of his bedroom, and I cannot help thinking that those intermediate floors were used in the time of his wife, and that they contained a nursery for the children, all of which are such disagreeable associations to the old man, that he shut up the whole three floors as soon as his wife had died, which I imagine to have been pretty soon; for I have never set eyes on her or on any young children, ever since I have lived in the opposite house.

What the General was like when he was ill I shiver to think; how he must have heaved under the bed clothes in those waves of passion that came over him, how impatient he must have been, and how rude to the doctors.

Not long ago he appeared in the sitting-room again, and I saw him go through a set of manœuvres all by himself one afternoon.

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He marched up and down the room with a very warlike air and brandished a stick at the pictures and ornaments, which he was treating as a substitute for the regiments he had once commanded. All the time that he moved he was issuing orders, and his moustache grew more pointed as he roared out the words of command. At last he charged against the mantelpiece, broke a vase, the fragments of which he flung all over the room, and then sank exhausted into a chair.

Even the parrot was frightened out of his customary insolence and folded himself into quite a small heap at the corner of the cage, and the General never moved for the rest of the afternoon. There he sat until the invading darkness of the winter day crept into the room, blotting the picture on the table from my sight, and wrapping the warrior in an impenetrable gloom. I suppose he imagined himself wounded in the battlefield, trampled to death by horses, with the noise of the cannon and the smell of powder all round him.

The next day the sky went through every shade of grey from early morning to evening. The street looked so mournful that I had to read my half-column about the mad Russian peasant several times before I could make up my mind not to follow her example. Perhaps my chief reasons for refraining from doing so lay in the facts that I knew of no church that would be sufficiently high, that had I known of one I should never guess how to get to the top of it, that, to accomplish my purpose, I should have had to go out and so violate the fundamental dogma of my religion, and lastly, that I had no children to destroy.

I looked over the way for consolation, looked to a quarter which has never disappointed me yet, and saw that the General and his daughter were moving restlessly about the room oppressed by the same sense of desolation as that from which I myself was suffering.

The

The girl wandered to the window as usual, and began to play with the parrot. She took him out of the cage and he walked up her arm bobbing his head majestically at each step. A moment afterwards, the General also came to the window, and their lips moved in conversation while through the gathering darkness I saw the General scratch first the parrot's head, and then his own, in a soft, undecided way, that made me think that somehow he must have confused himself with the bird.

A milk-boy ran along the street with a cart full of clattering cans, of which the dimly reflected image passed, like a film, across the pane of glass behind which the two figures stood playing near the cage. The General was engaging the parrot's attention, and the girl was gazing again mournfully into the street, deprived of the distraction which, in an inspired moment of an afternoon spent in waiting wearily for tea-time, she had discovered in the caressing of the bird.

Suddenly, just as the milk-boy echoed his dismal cry down the street, the General tossed the bird off his hand into the cage, shook the clenched fist of his other hand at it in his most violent manner, and stalked up and down in the full enjoyment of the greatest rage I had ever seen him indulge.

What the bird had done to this other hand I cannot say, but he held it away from him suspended in the air, and through the fierce anger which burned in his eyes I fancied I read a look of inexpressible wonder at the enormity of the offence which the bird had committed. His daughter, meanwhile, hurried about the room in a flustered condition, and the General once more approached the window, and stroked his moustache with the hand which was still undesecrated. Nor could the maimed Nelson himself have put more grandeur into the gesture.

We met the General at the window. At the window let us
take

take our leave of him, and if you are not satisfied after all that I have said that he is a General I may tell you that I do not think I only dreamed that one afternoon I saw the General ride off to a *levée*, his moustaches drooping nobly in two directions out of a hansom. He was dressed in a uniform the colour of which was scarcely to be distinguished from that of his face, and on his knees lay a magnificent black-plumed hat which was so high that, had he put it on his head, it must inevitably have stuck out at the top of the cab and looked ridiculous.

A Landscape

By Alfred Thornton



Marcel : An Hotel-Child

By Lena Milman

I

I HAD arrived in Venice, after a long journey, and, with a confused impression of lapping water, of shimmering mosaic, and one, far more distinct, of discontent with the room allotted me, had gone early to bed. My window looked upon a court with a well in the middle, and, as I had feared, the drawing of water aroused me betimes, so that it was but seven o'clock when, exasperated by the rattle of the chain which seemed suddenly to have grown louder than ever, I got up and went to the window. The clatter was accounted for by the inadequate strength that drew the handle to and fro. Surrounded by a group of Venetian women, each with twin copper pails slung over her shoulder, a little boy, evidently a *forestier*, was pulling with might and main, his foot set against the side of the well, his lips tightly pressed together. One of the onlookers good-naturedly laid her brown hand over his little fair one as though to help him, but : "No, no," he cried, "I can do it quite well myself," and, although the words were strange to the listeners, the redoubled vigour of his attitude, and the little frown, just visible under the brim of his hat, showed him impatient of aid. It was a pretty scene, and I watched until

all the pails were filled, and the little lad could let go the handle which had left red traces upon his palm.

Taking off his hat, he leaned for a moment against the wall, and I was conscious of an Englishman's innate contempt for a picturesque boy, as I looked at the graceful little figure, whose lines even the loose sailor's suit sufficed not altogether to disguise, and at the fair hair that waved upon the child's forehead. Still there was no lack of manliness in the boy's bearing, and he bounded into the house in a way which dispelled much of my prejudice.

After breakfast, I took a book into the hotel-garden, and was fortunate enough to find one of the recesses overlooking the canal empty, so that, in the intervals of my desultory reading, I could look towards *San Giorgio* and watch the gondolas go by. The garden was full of roses—pink, and white, and yellow—and, twining in and out of the stone balustrade, they shed their petals into the water. There was just breeze enough stirring to make the gondolas at the *traghetto* sway gently, and to flutter the yellow hat-ribbons of two gondoliers whose craft lay just below me. There was something about that gondola which attracted attention. By the brilliant velvet carpet, by the embroidered flounces of the awning, it seemed to struggle against the sombreness of its body, and, feeling it to be as thoroughly "bad form" as a pink-lined brougham, I was glad to notice that the stars and stripes floated at the bows, and not my national ensign. Presently, at a cry of "*Poppe!*" from the hotel, the two gondoliers sprang up, and, deftly turning, brought their boat to the water-steps, where a gaily-attired lady, and a man, whose yachting-cap but ill became him, stood waiting. There was just the length of the boat between us, so that, as they took their seats, I could hear the man say hurriedly: "Don't take the child to-day," and the woman,
with

with a little pout, answer : " I had promised that he should come, but, if he bores you . . . " and, just then, my little friend of the morning appeared on the top step. He was evidently in the highest spirits, and I was amused to see that he wore the yellow scarf and sash of a gondolier. He had just leapt eagerly into the boat, when the lady said, in a high-pitched American voice : " We can't take you to-day, Marcel ; we shall not be back until too late, so you must stay and amuse yourself in the hotel." I cannot bear to see a child disappointed, still less can I bear to see a child take disappointment meekly, as this child did. It is well for men, for women, to school themselves never to hope where they wish, but in children such power of self-repression argues a precocity of pain. Poor Marcel ! I saw how his face fell, I even saw him glance ruefully down at the fluttering fringes of his sash, but all he did was to go silently up to his mother, stoop down to kiss her, and leap out of the boat again to watch it out of sight, with tears in his eyes. I detest hotel-children, but this one so attracted me, that, when at luncheon, I saw him preparing to eat a little lonely meal at the table next to mine, I invited him to sit with me, and even told him how sorry I had been for his disappointment.

" I was sitting in the garden and saw the start," I explained.

" It was Monsieur's fault," said the child ; " he is often like that. Mother always lets me go with her, but mother's friends always want her all to themselves."

He spoke in a tone so matter-of-fact, that I thought that it must be forced and glanced uneasily at him, fearing lest I should discern some look of precocious sarcasm ; but the child's eyes were innocent of mirth, and all his attention seemed devoted to the tangled skein of macaroni before him, which he was endeavouring to wind into his mouth, Italian-fashion.

" I see

"I see that you are quite an old Italian," I said, pointing my fork at his plate. "I still chop my macaroni into inches, and even then I find it unmanageable."

"Mother and I have been in Europe ever since I can remember, but generally we are at Nice; it depends on mother's friends. I like Venice, but I have no one to play with."

I wondered at this, for the hotel seemed swarming with English-speaking girls and boys. But my new friend gave me no time for thought, as, with a little sigh of relief expressive of difficulty overcome, he laid his fork down upon his empty plate, and, evidently glad of a listener, told me of the English tutor who had given him lessons at Nice, not only in Latin and Greek, but also in cricket; of how his mother sometimes talked of putting him to school in England; of how Baldassare, the gondolier, had begun to teach him to row; and he showed me a little white blister on the palm of his hand, which testified to his exertions of the day before.

"Which way did you go?" I inquired.

"Just beyond the Giudecca. But we couldn't go far, as Monsieur wanted the gondola after dinner again."

"Is Monsieur a Frenchman?" I asked.

"Yes," was the laconic answer, from which I gathered that Marcel thought Monsieur unworthy of further remark.

I had feared that, after luncheon, the child might hang heavy on hand, but, no! he said: "Thank you for letting me sit with you!" and disappeared by the lift.

I was sitting smoking in the cabin-like hall, when, on an opposite sofa, I recognised a Mrs. Campbell, who had been my fellow-sojourner at Territet six months before, and crossed over to speak to her. Presently we were deep in memories of Geneva, which she interrupted to say: "I thought I saw you at luncheon with Marcel Van Lunn."

"I did

"I did not so much as know the child's name, but I felt sorry for him, seeing him alone, and invited him to sit at my table. Who is he?"

Mrs. Campbell desired nothing better than to impart information :

"Poor child ! I too am sorry for him. But, though I am often in the same hotel, I dare not take much notice of him, on account of his impossible mother. I have to be careful on account of *Félice*." (This was Mrs. Campbell's stolid daughter.)

Before ten minutes were passed, I was fully informed as to Mrs. Van Lunn's utter impossibility from the point of view of society. Monsieur—his name was Casimir Portel—was not her first travelling companion ; others might succeed him. Worse still, such was her notoriety on the Riviera, that she was known as "*Sally Lunn* !" I cared not at all, as far as Mrs. Van Lunn was concerned, but, as I listened to the sordid story, I saw again the pathetic profile of Marcel, and felt gloomily conscious of my impotence to avert the misery which I saw threaten.

That afternoon I wandered into the Piazza, and, as I sipped my coffee, espied at a table, not far off, Marcel, his mother, and Monsieur. The child seemed happy enough eating an ice, and, his back being turned to me, I had the better opportunity for studying his mother. She must have seen five-and-thirty summers, but, by much artifice, she had knocked off some ten of them to the superficial observer.

"Pretty?" I hesitated ere I answered the self-imposed question. "Yes ! decidedly pretty, but more remarkably well-dressed." The face, framed in wavy bronze hair, was irregular, but the soft skin, the very red lips, and bright eyes, would doubtless have made most men forgive the little blunt nose and the square chin, which, to women, would have seemed the most remarkable features.

Monsieur

Monsieur was far less attractive. He was tilting his chair back, so that I had a full view of him, from his low-crowned sailor-hat to his high-heeled boots ; and I noticed how he looked defiantly round, in a way which rather challenged attention from the passers-by to his fair companion than made it appear impertinent. He had small eyes and a mouth of almost African coarseness, which last he was at no pains to conceal, for, as he looked round at the company, he twisted first one side of his moustache and then the other.

"*Dépêche toi donc,*" I heard him say to Marcel, who seemed trying to make the delight of the ice as lasting as possible, by consuming it in almost imperceptible mouthfuls. "*Nous t'attendons déjà depuis une demi-heure,*" and he rapped impatiently upon the tray for the waiter, who was just then giving me my change.

During the next few days, my time was so taken up with sight-seeing, that I saw no more of Marcel, except at meals and from a distance. But, returning one day past San Moïse, I espied the painted chalice and waving red over the door, which announce Exposition. I am not a Catholic, but the Devotion of the Forty Hours so strongly appeals to me, that I pushed aside the buff curtain and went in. The church is architecturally one of the most contemptible in Venice, but riotous Rococo is admirably adapted for the display of festal crimson and gold, and that afternoon the impression was to me altogether delightful. The altar, agleam with lights, the faithful kneeling here and there in twos and threes or genuflecting as they passed to and fro, the silence within, made the more conspicuous by contrast with the noise of the *calle* without, the church, a palatial Presence-chamber, in which I gladly lingered. I was still standing just inside when, my eyes becoming more accustomed to the dim light, I recognised a little kneeling figure not far off as Marcel's. I was surprised, I confess,

but

but the child's praying made the place more solemn than ever. So solemn, indeed, that I felt an intruder, and slipped out into the air again. I was crossing the bridge, when I heard a light foot-fall and Marcel's voice greeted me. I said nothing about having seen him in church, but he began of his own accord.

"Don't tell Monsieur that you saw me in San Moïse. I don't mind mother's knowing, but Monsieur is what they call a Liberal, and so he always laughs at me for going to church."

The sarcasm of the deduction was quite lost upon the child, and, since I was not acquainted with Monsieur, I explained that there was no fear of my telling tales.

I intended going to Torcello next day, and it struck me that the child might enjoy a day on the lagoons, so I invited him to come too. He accepted at once, evidently in no fear that any one else should want his company. "May I bring my oar?" he asked. Any excuse for loitering on the lagoons being welcome, I gladly consented, and accordingly at eleven o'clock next morning, Marcel and I set off.

He had put on his gondolier's dress, and I thought that Mrs. Van Lunn, at her *entresol* window, looked quite proud of her son as he waved his hand to her.

"This is Mr. Rivers," shouted Marcel, rather to my confusion, but I took off my hat, the lady bowed graciously, and I felt that I had only myself to thank for the acquaintance of Mrs. Van Lunn.

I am an old Venetian, but the delights of the place never pall, and now, as I lay back upon the cushions, the eager child's face beside me was an added pleasure as he told me how often he had longed to go to Torcello, and how his mother's dislike to long excursions ("They tire her so," he explained), had always prevented his going.

The contrast between sun and shade is never more marked than at Venice, when, from the gloom of narrow canals, the gondola shoots out on to the lagoon. That day there was not enough wind to ruffle the surface of the water, which was as smooth as the sky, so that the islands seemed hanging in mid-air, and the velvet folds of the distant Alps fell immediately into the sea. Fishing-boats with tawny sails floated by, bearing sacred symbols as in solemn procession ; here and there in the shallows, brown-limbed boys waded after shell-fish.

To my joy, my companion spoke but little until we neared San Francesco in Deserto, where I had planned lunching ; with its associations, its stone-pine, its cypresses, its meadow, and its monastery, no island of the lagoons has for me a charm like this one, and, while the gondoliers were getting luncheon ready upon a daisy-strewn bank under the cypress shade, I took Marcel to see the cloisters and the chapel. The brother who admitted us was delighted with the child's reverence and interest : "*Cattolico !*" he said ; and I saw no reason to distress him by contradiction.

As we ate our luncheon, I told Marcel the story of St. Francis's famous sermon to the birds, and, appropriately enough, the larks sang over our heads, while the child, lying full length among the flowers, sought them in the blue.

"Last time I listened to the larks," he said, "I was in England. Mother had a little house near Ascot, and I never enjoyed myself so much, for I had her all to myself all day long. We did not know any of the people who lived round there."

He paused a moment, and then, as if impelled to speak of what had long been in his thoughts, he said, still looking up at the sky :

"Why is it, I wonder, that Félise Campbell is no longer allowed to play with me ? Mother says that it is because I'm an American,

American, and so Mrs. Campbell is afraid lest Félise should grow to talk like me. Mother says that I ought to be proud of being an American, and so I am ; but I should like some one to play with all the same. Besides, I don't think that mother can have guessed the right reason, for there were some very noisy American children in the hotel last week, and you must have seen Félise romping with them all day long. So what do you think is the real reason, Mr. Rivers ? ” and here the speaker rolled over on the grass and faced me.

It was morally impossible for me tell the truth, it was mentally impossible for me to invent an answer then and there, while Marcel's trusting blue eyes were fixed upon mine, so I evaded the question by throwing a stone into the water and saying :

“Do let us talk of something more interesting than Mrs. Campbell's reason or unreason. Tell me about your life at Ascot ? Had you no friends of your own there ? ”

“Yes ! I had one great friend : Father Simeon. He is one of the fathers at the convent, which was the next house to ours ; and I used to go to him every day for Latin. That was how I grew to wish to be a Catholic, for Father Simeon played the organ at Mass and Benediction, and he used often to let me sit up in the gallery with him. Mother had given permission for me to be ‘received,’ when, one day, Monsieur came down and heard of it. He made a dreadful fuss, insisted upon my lessons being stopped, and, when Father Simeon called to inquire after me, treated him so rudely that he never came back. I think, though, that he wrote me a letter, for I noticed how Monsieur walked down the drive to meet the postman for some time after, until, one day, I saw him slip a letter into his pocket and, though I cannot be sure, I think that I recognised the convent note-paper. Soon after we left for Nice, and I went to mother and asked whether

whether I might write to Father Simeon. She said that I might do so, and undertook to post the letter herself. I only wrote a few lines to say how sorry I was not to see him again, and that I hoped that some day he would write to me ; but, although I was careful to give him the address, he has never written, or, if he has, the letter must have been lost. When I am a man I shall be a Catholic and take mother to church with me. She will not need Monsieur for an escort then, will she ? When shall I be old enough to take care of mother, Mr. Rivers ? I was ten last birthday."

" Oh, you will want to be a good many years older and wiser ! " I said ; " and you must learn to take care of yourself first, and not come out for an excursion, as I see that you have done to-day, with no great-coat to put on when it turns chilly ! "

" May I row now ? " asked Marcel, eagerly, as, from below the great cross at the landing-stage, we pushed off for Torcello, and, taking my consent for granted, he sprang up even as he spoke, and bade the gondolier take his oar out of the rest. The man was willing enough to sit idly down opposite me and watch his little substitute. We made the slower progress, and occasionally the child's oar slipped ; but he was skilful enough on the whole, and the rhythmic sway of the little figure, all within my line of sight, so soothed me, that I was between sleeping and waking, until roused by Marcel's throwing himself panting down at my side. He looked very much over-heated, I thought, and I insisted upon his putting on one of the wraps which I had with me.

" Monsieur is always so impatient when I row," said Marcel, as soon as he had recovered his breath. " I have no sooner got into the swing than he bids me stop."

" Perhaps he is more careful of you than I have been ! " I suggested.

But

But "Oh, no! It's not that!" was the answer in tones so positive as to admit of no contradiction.

Presently the child went on: "Sometimes I think that the reason people don't care about me has to do with Monsieur. I remember that when mother and I were together at Nice last year, people were very kind to me, until Monsieur arrived, but after that I had no more invitations, and some even pretended not to see me when they met me in the street. I shouldn't have minded so much for myself, but I could see that mother noticed it. Oh! how I wish I were a man!"

It was but a few days later that I received news recalling me to England, and I was quite touched at the regret Marcel expressed. I gathered from the poor child that henceforward he would have once more to choose between solitude and making an unwelcome third with his mother and Monsieur, of whom the latter was at no pains to conceal his impatience of Marcel's company even at meals. The child begged me to let him come to see me off, and, on the way to the station, asked me for my card, and whether he might write to me. I had grown really fond of him, and gladly consented.

"We are going south in the spring," he said, as he stood on the platform, "but I will send you our address. Do go on being my friend, Mr. Rivers!"

That was the last sentence I heard as the train moved off, and I had no time to reply.

II

On my return to England, I did not forget to write to Marcel, but before hearing from him in answer, I unexpectedly succeeded, by the death of a distant relation, to a small estate in the West Indies,

Indies, and was obliged to go out there without delay. I was abroad for over twelve months, during which time I had but little leisure and a sharp attack of fever, which two circumstances, combined with the lack of a fixed address, led me to postpone writing to my little friend. When at length I returned home, I felt rather remorseful at finding among the letters awaiting me two or three directed in a childish hand, which I recognised as Marcel's. They were as little informing as children's letters are wont to be, and the last one bearing a date some six months old expressed disappointment at my long silence, and gave me an address which would find the writer but for the next few weeks. The time had so long passed by, that it had been unavailing for me to write, and I felt regretfully how likely it was that I should never see Marcel again.

The following spring, however, I set off as usual for Italy, and one wet day at Naples, was idly turning over the leaves of the hotel visitors' book, when, among recent entries, I read the following :

Mrs. Hyman F. Van Lunn,
Marcel Van Lunn, U.S.A.

I was standing in the *bureau* of the hotel at the time, so I inquired of the clerk whether he knew what had been the Van Lunn's' destination. At first it seemed as though the man had no recollection of them at all. Certainly no address had been left for possible letters, but the landlord, happening to come in and over-hearing my inquiries, reminded the clerk of Marcel, of whom he spoke as "*le petit du numéro soixante-dix qui jouait toujours de la mandoline tout seul dans sa chambre.*" So I learned that Mrs. Van Lunn and her son had spent a fortnight at Naples, and had then gone by steamer to Palermo. I hardly know how much a wish to see Marcel had to do with it, but I fancy that the child must have

have excited more interest in me than I admitted to myself ; for certainly a languid wish to see Sicily suddenly toughened to a determination. The rain had ceased, and the Mediterranean glittered alluringly in the pale afternoon sun. There seemed nothing to detain me in Naples. A steamer was to start that very evening, and, taking a berth, I started for Palermo. There is practically but one hotel, so I was not surprised to read Marcel's name on the register as, among a crowd of other travellers, I stood awaiting the landlord's pleasure in the hall ; nor did I fail to notice that, whereas Mrs. Van Lunn had a *suite au premier*, the number of her son's room was in three figures.

I had half expected to see him at luncheon-time, but not doing so, I made my way to his room, which was in the same passage as mine, but on the opposite side. As I drew near the door, I heard the tremolo of a mandoline within. It was Marcel, and he was singing "Carmela" in such Neapolitan as he could command :

Sleep on, Carmela !
Sweeter far than living 'tis to dream.

I knocked ; the singer stopped and came to open. I received a warm welcome.

"I was afraid that I should never see you again, Mr. Rivers," said Marcel, as, his hand on my arm, he led me to a chair next the window ; "and, ever since I said good-bye at Venice, I seem to have been collecting things to tell you ! You must have heard me singing 'Carmela.' Don't you remember how they used to sing it on the Grand Canal that year ? But I had no mandoline then. Mrs. Campbell gave it to me when she left. She told me that Félise could make nothing of it ! You never had much opinion of Félise, had you, Mr. Rivers ?" and Marcel, laughing merrily

merrily at my gesture expressive of the weariness with which the very mention of Félise filled me, at once changed the subject to one more interesting.

"Have you been to Monreale yet, Mr. Rivers? I have only been once. Mother let me sit on the box the first time she drove out there." (From this I judged that Mrs. Van Lunn was not alone at Palermo!) "May I go there with you? The terrace is full of flowers now, and the *custode* will let us lunch there. I have never forgotten our luncheon on that island," and so saying, he pointed to a photograph of San Francesco in Deserto, which was pinned to the wall.

It saddened me, as I looked round, to see evidences of this being the poor child's living-room as well as bedroom. A folding music-desk stood in one corner, while the dressing-table was littered with books and papers. The window looked into the garden, thickly planted with fantastic tropical plants, one great date-palm growing so near that one could all but touch the spiky leaves.

"I think that your room is too near the garden to be quite healthy," I remarked. "What does your mother say about it?"

"Mother finds the stairs tiring, and she is afraid of lifts," said the child, colouring. "She has never been up here; her rooms are nearly as far from mine as you remember they were at Venice. I have often asked Salvatore, our courier, to take a room for me close to hers, but he never does."

Spite of the schoolboy's jacket and trousers which replaced the sailor-suit, Marcel looked little less of a child than he had done at Venice; but I was glad to notice that his head was now quite on a level with my shoulder, and so his fragile appearance might merely result from his having outgrown his strength.

I asked

I asked him to come out with me and show me my way about the town, which he eagerly consented to do.

So it was that, for the next fortnight I saw a great deal of Marcel, and even exchanged a few words with his mother, and a cold bow or two with Monsieur, who, in a suit of tight white flannels, lolled about the hall. My first impression of Marcel, as singularly little changed in the last two years, was much modified. He had grown more serious, and now never referred to his dislike to Monsieur, although I could see that it had in no wise lessened. His eagerness for information showed me that his neglected education was a grief to him, and I had soon made up my mind that, before again bidding him good-bye, I would overcome my reluctance to seek an interview, and approach his mother upon the subject of sending her son to school. Marcel's resolve of being a Catholic was as strong as ever, and the devotion which he paid at the Lady-altar of any church we happened to enter especially struck me. Poor child! It was as though he had a conviction (never confessed even to himself) that he needed a woman's love, such as his own mother refused him, and sought and found it in the Divine Mother of God. Would not a sexless Protestantism have left his childish heart un comforted? In his room I noticed a little figure of the blue-robed *Immacolata* on her crescent, and I wondered whether the day would come when he would know how unfitted was the portrait of his mother to stand beside it.

One day Marcel told me what he considered delightful tidings. Monsieur was going away on business to Naples, while his mother stayed on at Palermo. This being so, I felt that Marcel stood in no need of my company, and I decided to seize the opportunity of making a tour of the island, returning to Palermo in a fortnight's time, and postponing until then the interview with Mrs. Van Lunn on her son's behalf. Marcel was so elated at Monsieur's departure

departure that he hardly expressed regret at mine, since I promised to return so soon. He would like to write to me though, he said, but, as I was travelling chiefly by sea, I could only give him the name of the hotel at Taormina, at which I intended spending the last few days of my fortnight.

Marcel was usually so methodical that I wondered at finding no letter awaiting me, nor did I receive any during my four days' sojourn at Taormina. Again, at the station at Palermo, there was no Marcel, although at parting he had eagerly volunteered to meet me, and although I had not failed to send a post-card giving the time of my arrival. Could it be that Mrs. Van Lunn had already gone? I inquired of the landlord as soon as I reached the hotel. "He is here!" was the answer, "he has been ill ever since you went away," and I noticed how Signor Tiziano lowered his voice as a group of visitors went by.

"But what is the matter?" I asked impatiently.

"Oh, a feverish attack; but I must beg of you, sir, to say nothing about it. It will do me so much harm if it is known that there is any sickness in the house. But here comes the English doctor!"

I gladly left Signor Tiziano's side to inquire of the doctor after his little patient.

He looked very grave. "It's a serious case," he said, as I followed him out of the hotel; "Malarial fever, caught from sleeping in one of the rooms looking on the garden. At this season they are most unhealthy, but Tiziano always gives them when no particular inquiries are made, as seems to have been the case in this instance. The child seems strangely lacking in recuperative force, but to-day there is a decided improvement. He has often asked for you, but, as I hope he may sleep, I must beg of you to wait until to-morrow to see him. Can you tell me, by the

the

the way, whether the child is a Catholic? The mother denies it, but certainly, in his delirium, he would constantly repeat passages of the Rosary."

I gave what information I could about Marcel's religion. "He is far too much alone," I added, "his is not a morbid temperament though a sensitive one, but his life has been too empty of the amusements natural to his age."

At ten o'clock next morning the doctor knocked at my door: "Will you come to see the child now?" he said; and I followed him.

I was prepared for a great change in Marcel, but not for so great a one as I found. His curls had been shorn, so that the little thin face was outlined sharply upon the pillow. Too weak to greet me except by a little smile, I noticed how the hand that lay upon the sheet moved restlessly, and I took hold of it to find the fingers scarcely able to return the slightest pressure.

I sat down beside him. "I am so grieved to find you like this," I said; "now, I shall not leave you until you have grown quite strong again." The room struck me as sadder than sick rooms are wont to be. All Marcel's little belongings were heaped together in one corner, and covered with a sheet, through which I could trace the gourd-like outline of his mandoline. The photographs and music had been stripped from the walls, and all that was left was the crucifix over his head, from behind which a plaited palm, which he had jealously guarded, had been ruthlessly torn. On the table beside him, among an array of medicine bottles, soared the *Immacolata*. His mother's portrait lay on the bed within reach of his hand. The palm-leaves without, swayed by the sirocco, seemed to wave menaces. I sat there for some time stroking the hand that lay so passively in mine, and

was glad to see that, far from exciting, my presence seemed to soothe the invalid, so that he soon fell asleep. I was so afraid of moving, lest I should awake him, that I did not get up when Mrs. Van Lunn came in. Apparently, she had come on my account rather than her child's, for, almost without glancing at him, she handed me a visiting-card, on which I read the words : "Will you come to see me this afternoon ? Room 15." It was no time for ceremony so I merely bowed my head in assent, and she hurried away.

Directly after luncheon, I bade a waiter announce me to Mrs. Van Lunn, whom, to my surprise, I found in a room encumbered with luggage. She wasted a little time in preliminary apologies for the untidiness of her *salon*, and then said that she ventured to ask me to do her a service, which she had the less hesitation in asking, as she had noticed the kind interest which I took in Marcel, of whom she spoke as her "dear child."

Shortly, apart from many specious excuses, she proposed leaving her only child, whom she knew to be, at least, seriously ill, in the care of a stranger. She had received a telegram, she said, summoning her to Naples on business, and go she must, by the evening steamer. She had observed my kind feeling for Marcel, and she hoped that, if I were staying on at Palermo, I would look in occasionally, and see that he was receiving proper attention. She said that the child was so fond of me that she felt quite happy about leaving him, and she had left a cheque with Signor Tiziano.

I was so amazed at the woman's effrontery that I found myself stammering consent in disjointed sentences, and not doing what, all the while, I felt to be my duty, namely, to urge her to delay her start at least for a few days, lest the sorrow for her departure should

should throw the child back again. I made the litter of packing in the room an excuse for hastily taking my leave, merely begging her not to omit to assure Marcel that I would stay with him until she returned, which she said she would certainly do within a week or two.

I happened to be sitting, writing on my knee beside Marcel's bed, when his mother came to tell him she was going away, but :

"Do not let me disturb you," she said, "I can only stay a minute."

I could see by the way his countenance changed that her travelling dress had partly prepared Marcel for the announcement she came to make. She leant over to kiss him, "Marcel," she said, "I am obliged to go away for a few days ; mind that you do all that Mr. Rivers bids you, and next week I shall hope to find you almost yourself again. The doctor tells me that you are getting on famously."

Marcel would have suffered anything at his mother's hands without a murmur, and, though I saw his lips tremble, he merely whispered :

"Good-bye, mother !" and Mrs. Van Lunn's red lips brushed her son's forehead, her tightly gloved hand was laid but for a moment in mine, before, with a tinkle of the little gold lucky-bell at her wrist, she went her way. I sat down to my writing again, and, when next I looked up, Marcel's eyes were brimming.

"Be a good, brave boy !" I said, laying my hand on his, which were tightly clasped together, and he smiled through his tears as he said : "After all it is Monsieur's fault, mother did not want to leave me."

Next morning I inquired anxiously of the nursing-sister how he had slept, and was relieved at her fairly good report. Once, indeed

indeed she told me that he had started from his pillow crying : "I hate him, I hate him," and the words were so unlike her gentle little patient that she had feared a return of fever, but none such had ensued. I knew only too well to whom these words referred, and I knew too that this hatred had been begotten of love, as such hates are.

The convalescence was so slow that the doctor recommended a move to the sunny side of the house. Signor Tiziano was loth to allow it. He said that if it once got about that there was sickness in the house, his season was spoilt ; but I insisted, and at last he consented on condition that the move was made under his personal supervision and after dark. Accordingly the room was made ready and, at dead of night, Signor Tiziano in his stockinged feet held the light before me as I carried Marcel through the passages. Spite of the many blankets in which he was wrapped, I was quite shocked at the lightness of my burden. As events proved, we were only too successful in effecting the change noiselessly.

The child's strength was gradually returning, and he had even walked twice up and down the room supporting himself by chairs and tables, when one day I looked into his room on my way out. The sister with her finger on her lip, pointed to where the little invalid lay calmly asleep upon a sofa. Softly I closed the door behind me, but hardly had I done so, when it appears that the sister thought of something she required from the chemist's, and, running after me, stopped me a few minutes in the hall. What happened in the interval I learned later !

The room next to Marcel's had been empty some days, but, as I had passed down the passage, I had noticed a portmanteau at the door and had recognised the initials as belonging to an English family called Ford, whom I had known slightly at
Geneva

Geneva and whom I had grown to know better during my stay at Palermo. Mrs. Ford told me how that morning she and her sister (not knowing that Marcel was next door) fell to discussing Mrs. Vann Lunn, whom they had seen and observed at Nice.

"I could forgive her anything save her neglect of that dear child," said Mrs. Ford; "he is in the hotel now, ill with fever, from which a little care would have preserved him, while she has gone to amuse herself at Naples."

While she was speaking, she heard a soft knock, and almost before she had had time to answer, the door was pushed open with a jerk, and Marcel, supporting himself by the handle, stood before her. Wasted with illness, a feverish flush upon his cheek, he exclaimed: "It is not true! Indeed, indeed, it is not true. Mother stayed here until the doctor said I was nearly all right again, and she did not want to go. It was Monsieur who made her, and she is ever so fond of me and ever so kind, and I love her more than . . ." the poor child's voice failed and Mrs. Ford caught him as he fell. Marcel had fainted.

The nurse came along the passage just then, and met the two terrified ladies carrying the boy back to his room. It was some time ere he recovered consciousness, and, even before the doctor came, I knew the truth: this last effort had overtaxed his feeble stock of strength—he was dying.

I lost no time in telegraphing for his mother and I told Marcel that I had done so, for, although giving no hope of his recovery, the Doctor said that he might last a week.

Poor child! he seemed clinging to life, and the way in which he eagerly looked towards the door when any one came in or even when there were footsteps in the passage, told me for whose coming he chiefly longed. What could I do? Mrs. Van Lunn

was

was possibly hurrying to him, possibly she had gone on beyond Naples and the telegram had not reached her (I have an Englishman's distrust of foreign posts). So I thought as I stood beside the bedside, grieving that, though Marcel looked the more piteous when I left him, I was powerless to give him his heart's desire. Suddenly my eye fell upon the *Immacolata*, who was the more conspicuous that, since the child was beyond human aid, there was little need of medicine bottles. Marcel's own mother had failed him, what of letting him draw nearer to the Mother of God? I laid the blue and white statuette upon the sheet before him and whispered, using the idiom which I knew to be familiar to him, "Would it be any comfort to you if I went to San Giuseppe's, and asked the priest to 'receive' you?"

We had forbidden him to speak and he was very docile, so he merely bowed his head in assent, while an expression of real delight came over the wan little face. I told the nursing-sister in a few words what I intended to do, and she was quite overcome with joy. It had been such a grief to her, she said, when she heard that the child was only at heart a Catholic, and therefore would be denied the last sacraments.

It was still so early that I met the priest in the church, preceded by a tiny server about to celebrate Mass. I formed his congregation in a side-chapel, and followed him into the sacristy, where my Italian but just sufficed to tell him what I needed. I explained how Marcel had been instructed two years ago, had constantly attended Mass and read the books given him by Father Simeon. I told him, too, that the child understood a fair amount of Latin. I was not personally attracted by the good Father. He was evidently of the peasant class and totally uneducated in all but theology. For a moment, my heretic blood rebelled
against

against the idea of the gross, unkempt man having any dealings with the pure little body and soul of Marcel. But, as I talked, a light of real enthusiasm lit up the coarsely-moulded face, so that I lost sight of the man in the priest, and eagerly accepted his offer of coming there and then.

The ceremony was a short one, merely conditional Baptism, and the expression of peace on the little convert's face more than repaid me for the responsibility which I had taken. He was sinking. There was no doubt of that, and it pained me to see how, even now, his eyes were constantly fixed upon the door. Evidently the hope of seeing his mother had not quite died out. The end came even sooner than we had feared. Three days after his "reception" I was sitting beside him, when I saw his lips move and bent down to listen :

"Tell her that I forgive . . ." But the effort to speak even so few words brought on so alarming an attack of faintness that I sent for the priest, who hastened to administer Extreme Unction. The nursing-sister and I were quite overcome with grief, but there was little suffering. Only a few moments of gasping for breath, the hands let go their hold of the *Immacolata*, a look of almost rapture was in his eyes as a little sobbing cry of "Mother !" burst from him, and so startled me that I, too, turned and looked towards the door, expecting to see that Mrs. Van Lunn had indeed come. But, no ! and, when again I looked at the little figure in the bed, I saw that all was over.

Was it a vision of the blue-robed, star-crowned Madonna that he had so greeted, or one of Mrs. Van Lunn, in her *Doucet* travelling suit, as he had seen her last, as he had so longed to see her again ?

* * * * *

It was about six months after this that, one day in Paris, my
eye,

eye, catching sight of a familiar name among the society paragraphs in *Galignani*, I read the following announcement :

Wedding.—At the American Church of the Ascension, on Thursday, the 10th inst., Lillie, widow of Hyman F. Van Lunn, of Kansas, U.S.A., was married to M. Casimir Portel, of the Villa Paradis, Nice.

So Mrs. Van Lunn was *rangée*. The obstacle had been removed.

To Rollo

Untimely Taken

By Kenneth Grahame

PUPPY, yours a pleasant grave,
Where the seeding grasses wave !
Now on frolic morns the kitten
Over you, once scratched and bitten—
Still forgiving !—plays alone.
You, who planted many a bone,
Planted now yourself, repose,
Tranquil tail, incurious nose !
Chased no more, the indifferent bee
Drones a sun-steeped elegy.

*Puppy, where long grasses wave,
Surely yours a pleasant grave !*

“Whom the gods love”—was this why,
Rollo, you must early die ?
Cheerless lay the realms of night—
Now your small unconquered sprite
(Still familiar, as with us)
Bites the ears of Cerberus :

Chases

Chases Pluto, Lord of Hell,
Round the fields of asphodel :
Sinks to sleep at last, supine
On the lap of Proserpine !
*While your earthly part shall pass,
Puppy, into flowers and grass !*

The Restless River

By Evelyn Sharp

THE land of Nonamia was once ruled by an extremely original Queen. Even her childhood had been exceptional, for, although the fairies had been invited as usual to her christening, not one of them had spoilt the fun by making unpleasant predictions, and not one of them had given her a single gift, that could be of any use to her afterwards. So the Queen of Nonamia had nothing to help her through life, except her own wits ; she was not even beautiful, and her chief virtue was the patience she showed for the eternal stupidity of the Nonamiacs. There was a King of Nonamia, too, but no one knew anything about him, except that he was the husband of the Queen of Nonamia ; and that, indeed, was the most distinctive thing that could be said about him. For the marriage of the Queen had been just as original as everything else about her. She employed none of the usual devices for obtaining an interesting husband, but merely sent into the next country for the eldest son of the reigning king.

“I decline to marry a tailor merely because he has killed a few giants, or outwitted a bear,” she declared to her guardians, when they naturally objected to such an obvious mode of selection. “He is a tailor, for all that ; and the same may be said of the woodcutter’s

woodcutter's son, who has contrived to climb a beanstalk with success. I am the Queen of Nonamia, and I am going to marry a prince, and he shall not be a younger son. Younger sons are greatly overrated, just because they are clever enough to do things. Who wants to marry a man because he can do things?"

The King of Nonamia had not done very much before he married the Queen. But he came, when he was sent for; and, for the rest of his life, he only did what the Queen told him. And the Queen told him very little.

When they came to have a son, the King supposed they would have to select a fairy to be its godmother. His wife smiled upon him, leniently. She never realised the success of her marriage so much as when the King made suggestions she was able to contradict.

"That is so like you, dearest," she said. And the King was immensely pleased at being told he was like himself. But the Queen of Nonamia looked at the features of the baby Prince, as he lay in his cradle of rose leaves; and she saw that they were the features of his kingly father, her husband, and she nodded her head, thoughtfully. "That child will need bringing up," she said. "Why not a fairy godfather? I could manage a godfather, but a godmother would want to manage me, and I could not endure that for a moment."

So the little Prince of Nonamia had a fairy godfather.

The Nonamiacs had never heard of such a thing before; but the Queen of Nonamia did so many things that had never been heard of before, that one, more or less, made very little difference. And they were bound to acknowledge, that a fairy godfather was, in many ways, a great improvement. He arrived on foot, to begin with, and walked in at the front door, instead of coming
down

down with a bang, in a cloud of blue smoke, after keeping everybody waiting. And he caused no jealousy among the fairies, who had *not* been asked to be godmothers; and he talked just like every one else, only not quite so much. In fact, there was nothing to distinguish him from quite an ordinary person.

One or two people complained of the lack of excitement. "It is not in the least like a royal christening," they grumbled. "Surely, it is time something began to go wrong?"

But the least stupid of the Nonamiacs shook their heads. "You forget," they said, "that the usual things never happen to the Queen of Nonamia."

When the banquet was over, the fairy godfather was taken to the cradle of the royal infant. He looked at it for a long time, without speaking, which, again, was a feat that no fairy godmother had ever been known to accomplish; and he nervously declined the honour of taking the baby in his arms. "He is no godfather at all," complained the royal nurses, who disliked innovations; but, although he knew perfectly well what they were thinking, he did not trouble to bewitch them for it, and merely continued to look at the little Prince.

"Well," said the Queen of Nonamia. "Will my son be an exceptional prince?"

The fairy godfather shook his head.

"I see nothing exceptional," he said, slowly. "I see restlessness, and adventure, and love. The river that knows no rest will bring him his greatest happiness; it will call him, when the time comes, and neither your art, nor mine, will keep him from it. He will do everything that other princes do, especially when he is in love. And he will always be in love from the time he is sixteen."

The Queen of Nonamia looked again at the features of her tiny son, and she sighed.

"Then

"Then he will only be an ordinary prince, after all," she said.

"Not entirely," resumed the fairy godfather. "For it is with the Restless River itself, that he will be in love, and no one will be able to prevent it."

"That at least is original, if inconvenient," said the Queen.

"I see one more thing," continued the fairy godfather. "He will end in marrying the woodcutter's daughter."

"What?" exclaimed the Queen in dismay. "Just like all his ancestors! I will never allow such a thing. All the woodcutters' daughters shall be exterminated; all the woodcutters shall be exterminated! My son shall marry a princess. I have said it."

"Your son will marry the woodcutter's daughter," repeated the fairy godfather, grimly.

"But you said yourself that he would fall in love with the Restless River," protested the Queen. "To fall in love with a river is curious, but it is not the same thing as falling in love with a woodcutter's daughter. How do you explain the contradiction?"

"I cannot explain it," said the fairy godfather, simply. "I have told you all I know."

Which, of course, was an admission that a fairy godmother would never have made at all.

The courtiers grew discontented. Was the christening going to pass off, without even a present? It seemed as though the fairy godfather guessed their thoughts, for he turned to the Queen, with a smile.

"I shall not forget my godson," he said. "When he wants me, I shall be there. I have given him my gift."

And he bowed to every one present, and walked straight out of the

the palace, and disappeared among the crowd, as quietly as he had come. It was the dullest christening that had ever taken place in Nonamia. But it was distinctly original.

And what was the present of the fairy godfather ?

"There is no present at all. That is what comes of these new-fangled notions," said the royal nurses, contemptuously.

"A godmother," said the courtiers, "would have told all the world what *her* present was."

But the Queen made ready for action ; and, before sundown that day, the decree was issued throughout the length and breadth of Nonamia, that all woodcutters were to be gone from the country within twenty-four hours, and that all their daughters were to be brought to her for extermination, at noon next day. The Queen was nothing, if she was not thorough ; and she meant to see for herself that the usual devices were not practised, in order to preserve an impossible wife for her son.

So, at noon next day, the Queen of Nonamia sat in judgment, on the hill outside her palace. All around her, stretched the flat and uninteresting land of Nonamia ; not a mountain nor a river broke the monotony of the scene, nothing but the Sluggish Brook, that marked the boundary of her dominions. And by her side, in his cradle of rose leaves, the Prince of Nonamia slept peacefully. Nobody asked where the King of Nonamia was.

The Queen beckoned to her Prime Minister. "Have all the woodcutters been banished ?" she demanded.

The Prime Minister obviously trembled.

"Please your Majesty," he stammered, "there was but one to be found." A murmur of disappointment ran through the crowd of Nonamiacs ; they had certainly expected more excitement than this.

"Is all the wood in my kingdom cut down by one man ?"
asked

asked the Queen scornfully. The Prime Minister put his hand to his head instinctively.

"Please your Majesty," he stammered afresh, "there is no wood at all in your kingdom."

A new sensation thrilled the crowd of Nonamiacs. It had never occurred to them before that this, indeed, was the case. The Queen glanced again over the land of Nonamia; and she saw not a tree, nor a bush, in the whole of it. The fact had never occurred to her, either; but she was too much of a Queen to confess that.

"Then, what is the use of a woodcutter at all?" she asked.

"Please your Majesty," said the unhappy Prime Minister, "it isn't any use. But he only came here yesterday, to see the christening; and he came across the Sluggish Brook, no one knows whence; and he is prepared to go back again now, if your Majesty so wills it."

"Certainly, I will it," said the Queen. "Why should we have a woodcutter, if there are no trees? The idea is ridiculous. Besides, that settles the whole matter at once. If there are no trees, there are no woodcutters; and if there are no woodcutters, there are no woodcutters' daughters; and so, my son shall marry a princess, as I said. The assembly is over."

"Please your Majesty," began the Prime Minister again, "there *is* a daughter, and she came with her father, yesterday; and I have put them both in your Majesty's dungeon, and——"

The Queen smiled, with the indulgence she always showed for the actions of her public ministers, and she waved him away with her hand.

"Bring them both here at once," she commanded. "And tell the Royal Executioner to sharpen his axe. She shall be beheaded; and after that, we can have lunch."

"Please

"Please your Majesty, there is very little to behead," said the Prime Minister; but the look in the Queen's eyes sent him flying off to the royal dungeon, without another word. The Queen yawned; and by her side, in his cradle of rose leaves, the tiny Prince slept soundly.

When the Prime Minister came back again, he was accompanied by the Royal Executioner with his axe upon his shoulder, and between them both walked the woodcutter. No one, at first, could see the woodcutter's daughter at all; but, as the little group stood before the throne, the tallest of the Nonamiacs were able to distinguish a small bundle, in a red shawl, that lay in the woodcutter's arms. And this was the woodcutter's daughter.

"There is certainly very little to behead," said the Queen, thoughtfully. The Royal Executioner looked immensely relieved. "But, for all that," continued the Queen, "she must be exterminated."

The woodcutter said nothing. But the little Prince stirred in his sleep, and held out his tiny arms, and cried. The Queen stamped her foot.

"There is no time to be lost," she said, sternly. "So, choose any death you please for her. She shall be exterminated, *now*."

The woodcutter remained indifferent. He looked over the length and breadth of Nonamia, and down at the little red bundle in his arms.

"I should like her to be drowned in the Sluggish Brook," he said. And the originality of the request so pleased the Queen, that she ordered the royal carriages, and proceeded to carry it out immediately. All day long, the royal procession wound its way across the Land of Nonamia, and just before sundown it arrived at the edge of the Sluggish Brook. The woodcutter stooped down with a smile, and laid the little red bundle on the calm water. And

suddenly, the Sluggish Brook became a swift, rushing torrent, that tossed the tiny bundle from side to side, and carried it swiftly out of sight ; and the water sighed and trembled, and grew into a wide and passionate river that swirled along, in the wake of the woodcutter's daughter. The woodcutter himself was no longer to be seen, but no one had noticed his departure, for the crowd of Nonamiacs were all stupefied at the change that had come over the Sluggish Brook. They had never seen anything like it before, and that in itself was quite enough to stupefy a Nonamiac.

The Queen, as usual, was the first to recover.

"That is done," she said, cheerfully. "And my son shall marry a princess."

But she knew, as well as every one present, that the Sluggish Brook had become the Restless River.

For sixteen years, the Prince of Nonamia was never allowed to go beyond the palace garden. And, as the whole court was forbidden, under pain of instant extermination, to mention the circumstances of his christening, there seemed very little probability of his ever discovering the fate that had been predicted for him. To make this still more certain, he was not even taught to read or write, and he grew up in a state of ignorance that would have shamed the poorest person in Nonamia. But the Prince of Nonamia did not know the meaning of shame, for he had never had any companions ; and the courtiers tolerated him, as ordinary people tolerate something that is strange and incomprehensible. For, to the Nonamiacs, there was something extremely weird in the grave and silent youth, who knew nothing of life and the world, and only cared for being in the open air. He would sit for hours, in the most secluded part of the garden, and dream the daylight away ; he never asked why the garden walls were so high, nor how the world contained so few people, nor whether
there

there was any more of it than he had seen already. He wondered, sometimes, why they put weapons in his hand, and told him to kill something, or taught him to fence with them. "Why should I injure a bird that flies and is happy?" he asked. "And how does it amuse you to pretend that I am dead? It is far more interesting to sit in the sunshine, and talk to the flowers, and think about life." And the Nonamiacs, who, of course, knew far more about life than the poor, lonely Prince, smiled in their superior knowledge, and pitied him for not understanding how ignorant he was; and the King, who had his own views about the education of princes, looked on unhappily.

But the Queen was supremely content.

"My son is original," she said. "In spite of his father, and his godfather, and his ancestors, he is original, as I intended him to be. And he shall marry a princess."

People sometimes wondered at the long silence of the fairy godfather; but the Queen did not mind that at all. "That is the best of having a fairy godfather," she said. "If it had been a godmother, now, she would have been interfering ever since, and I cannot endure interference."

On his sixteenth birthday, she sent for the Prince, and showed him the pictures of all the neighbouring princesses for miles round.

"It is time for you to marry a princess," she told him. "And since you are my son, and I love you, I wish you to marry the wife of your choice."

"How can I choose?" asked the Prince, in bewilderment. "They all look alike, to me. How can I care for one more than another? Is there really any difference between them?"

"Of course," said the Queen of Nonamia, "they are all princesses, so you cannot expect to find *very* much difference between

between them. But choose the most beautiful of them all, and she shall come here to marry you ; and, after that, you can go into the world and travel."

"The world?" asked the Prince. "Where is that? Is it the garden on the other side of the wall ; and is it full of princesses, who are all exactly alike?"

"You will see, when you are married," answered his mother. But the Prince asked leave to think it over ; and he wandered away to find his father, who was nodding over the morning paper in his library. A visit from his son was so unusual, however, that he woke up at once, and asked him what he wanted.

"That is what I don't know," sighed the Prince. "But I know I don't want to marry any of the beautiful, dull pictures my Queen-Mother has been showing me."

"Ah," thought the King, "the boy is a son of mine, after all."

"When you were a Prince, father," pursued his son, "and knew as little as I do about the garden on the other side of the wall, did *you* want to marry the picture of my Queen-Mother?"

The King remembered the picture of the Queen of Nonamia, and he coughed uncomfortably.

"Perhaps not. At least—of course, yes," he said, hastily, and coughed again.

"I suppose," continued the Prince, "they just showed you a lot of princesses, who all looked exactly alike, and you had to choose one, as I have got to. But are there no people in the world who can be distinguished from one another?"

"A certain number," replied the King.

"Then why," persisted the Prince, "may I not go out into the garden, on the other side of the wall, and choose a princess for myself?"

The King glanced nervously over his shoulder.

"You

"You forget your Queen-Mother," he whispered.

The Prince sprang to his feet, and began pacing restlessly up and down the room.

"I want you to give me something, father," he cried. "I want the gold key that hangs on your watch-chain, the key of the Sky Turret."

The King visibly trembled. The Sky Turret was the highest of the five turrets of the Palace of Nonamia, the one that looked over the length and breadth of the land of Nonamia; and no one had been allowed to enter it since the Prince's christening.

"Give it to me, father," he said, holding out his hand. "I want to look into the garden, on the other side of the wall."

The old King sighed, and gave him the key. "He is so like his dear mother," he murmured, in extenuation. And the Prince bounded out of the room, and ran straight up to the Sky Turret, and stepped out on the battlements. He looked round him, breathlessly, over the length and breadth of Nonamia, the flat and treeless country of Nonamia; and he marvelled at what he saw there; but, most of all, he wondered what it was that glistened and sparkled in the sunshine, just where the sky met the land, on the edge of the country of Nonamia.

The King had followed him up the stairs, and was standing by his side. He noted the wild, rapt look on his son's face, and it frightened him. "If his mother sees him, she will know," he thought, uneasily.

"Tell me, father," said the Prince, at last; "what is that thin, mysterious line of silver, that shines and glistens in the sunlight?"

"That," said the King, "is what they call the Restless River."

"The Restless River? What a beautiful name," exclaimed the

the Prince. "I am going there, at once. That is what I have wanted all my life, father, and you are going to help me to get there."

"My son," began the old King, in alarm; "you forget your Queen——"

"It is impossible to forget her," answered the Prince, with dignity. "I will come back again, when I have been to the Restless River. But I am going to find a princess for myself, a princess who is not like every one else. What is the use of a wife who is not to be distinguished from every one else? Father, I want the key of the little white door that leads into the garden on the other side of the wall."

And the King, who saw more resemblance, every moment, between the Prince and his mother, gave up the key without another word, and went back to nod over the morning paper, and pretend that nothing had happened.

But the Prince had already unlocked the little white door, and was speeding over the land of Nonamia, as fast as his legs would carry him.

"Is this the way to the Restless River?" he asked of the first peasant he met.

"Can you not read?" said the peasant, roughly, pointing to the direction on the sign-post.

"No," answered the Prince, simply; and he wondered why the man laughed at him. But he hastened on more swiftly than ever, and stood at last on the bank of the Restless River. There it was, rushing along as madly, and as untiringly, as it had done on the day when the woodcutter's daughter was drowned in it.

"Stop! stop!" cried the Prince, as he knelt down beside it, and plunged his hands into the turbulent water. "I want to
speak

“speak with you, and you do not stay a moment. Are you not weary of hurrying along like that?”

But the river rushed on as before.

“Stay for one moment,” begged the Prince. “I am so sorry for you, poor Restless River. Have you no time even to stay, and be comforted?”

But the river rushed on as before.

“Is it possible,” continued the Prince, “that you are obliged to hurry away so fast? I should so like to help you, poor Restless River. Will you tell me if I can do anything to bring you rest?”

As he said these words, a sudden calm fell on the rushing stream; and down the middle of it came floating a curious craft, all made of green lily leaves, and of white lily petals; and in it sat the most beautiful girl the Prince had ever seen.

She laughed outright, when she saw him kneeling there, and she steered her boat straight for the shore. The Prince had never heard a girl laugh before; and he could hardly wait until the boat touched the bank, before he stooped down, and lifted her up in his arms, and kissed her two cheeks. Then they both laughed together, and the Prince started at the sound of his own voice. For he had never heard himself laugh before, either.

“Now, I know why I had to come to the Restless River,” said the Prince, happily.

“You have been a very long time coming,” said the girl with a pout.

“Oh, but I am going to stay, now I have come,” the Prince assured her. “I have found a princess for myself, and the Queen-Mother may keep all her stupid pictures for her own amusement.

But the girl shook her head.

“I cannot

"I cannot stay here with you," she said, sadly. "I must be disenchanted first, for there is no rest for me, yet. See! it is calling me, already." For the river had begun to toss and rock again, and the lily boat was drifting away from the shore.

"Can I do nothing to disenchant you?" said the Prince, frantically. "I will go to the end of the world to serve you."

"Alas! I cannot tell you," answered the girl. "I only know that none but my true lover can disenchant me, and that he will be a Prince, who can neither read nor write."

"I am he! I am he!" cried the Prince, joyfully. "But, tell me first who you are?"

"I," said the girl, as she sprang into her green and white boat, "am the Restless River." And with that she was whirled away out of sight. And the river rushed on as before.

Then the Prince walked thoughtfully along the bank of the Restless River.

"I wonder why the Queen-Mother did not bring me up like other Princes?" he murmured. "Most people, I have been told, have a fairy godmother, who comes and helps them whenever they want to disenchant anybody. But I have only a godfather, and he never comes near me at all."

The words were hardly out of his mouth when a grave-looking man suddenly came from nowhere at all, and stood in the path just in front of him.

"You have never wanted me before," he said calmly. "And you need not explain what you do want, now. I know all about it, and I hate unnecessary details. But, first of all, are you prepared to go through a certain amount of discomfort, and, if necessary, to fight?"

"I am a coward, and I hate fighting," said the Prince, sadly. "But I am a true lover, and I will die for my love if need be."

"That

"That I know full well, for are you not my godson?" said the fairy godfather, chuckling. "So, go and wrest the sharpest sword in the world from the strongest giant in the world, and take it to the head of the Restless River, and remove the dragon, who never ceases to flap his wings. And, after that, the river will be at peace."

"But where is the strongest giant in the world to be found?" asked the Prince.

"Over there, in a great stone castle, he sits alone," replied his godfather; "and only you, who can neither read nor write, will be allowed to enter there; for all the secrets of the world are in his keeping, and they are written on all the ceilings, and all the walls, and all the floors. So, start at once, and luck be with you."

"But when I have removed the dragon, what then?" asked the Prince.

"If you do not know what to do *then*," laughed his godfather, "you are no godson of mine."

And the Prince, who was about to thank him for his information, found that there was no one left to thank, for the fairy godfather had already gone back to nowhere at all; and he was left to find the castle of the strongest giant in the world. This was not very difficult, however, for there was but one castle to be seen; and the Prince walked up to it boldly, and shouted for admission.

"Go away," growled a disagreeable voice from within. "All the secrets in the world are written here, and you must not come in."

"Nonsense," said the Prince. "I can neither read nor write, so let me in. Surely, you must be very tired of keeping all the secrets in the world?"

"Keeping

"Keeping a secret is the dullest occupation imaginable, especially when it is nearly always the same secret," confessed the giant ; and he stretched a long arm out of the window, and fished up the Prince, and set him on the table before him. "You are quite sure you can neither read nor write?" he added, suspiciously.

"If I could," laughed the Prince, "it would never make me wish to keep a secret. Besides, I have a secret of my own, that is far more precious than all those you are guarding so jealously."

"What is that?" asked the giant, anxiously. "I am so tired of keeping the same old secrets, and I would give anything I possess to learn a new one."

"Done with you," said the Prince, who was delighted at the prospect of not having to fight, after all. "Give me the sword, that is hanging at your side, and I will tell you my secret."

And the weary old giant unbuckled the sharpest sword in the world, and handed it to the Prince.

"Now, tell me your secret," he said.

The Prince folded his arms, and laughed.

"I am in love with the most beautiful woman in the world," he said.

But the giant rushed at him, furiously.

"You have cheated me," he screamed. "Give me back my sword! *That* is not a new secret, it is the oldest secret there is; it is exactly the same as all the secrets I have been keeping for millions of years!"

"Then you won't keep them any longer," said the Prince ; and the sharpest sword in the world sent the giant's head rolling down the stairs. And the Prince opened all the doors, and all the windows ; and every secret in the castle flew out on the four winds
of

of heaven ; and that is why no one has ever kept a secret again, from that day to this. And the Prince walked on swiftly, until he reached the head of the Restless River.

And there lay a great dragon, in the middle of the stream, ceaselessly flapping his enormous wings, and making such a disturbance in the water, that the river was forced to rush downwards in its mad career.

"So *you* are the cause of all the trouble, eh?" said the Prince. "Just come out of that, at once, will you?"

"I only wish I could," groaned the dragon, disconsolately. "I have been at it, for sixteen years, now ; and I shall never be released, until the Prince comes, who can neither read nor write. And that is never likely to happen ; for even Princes are educated, nowadays."

"It has already happened," said the Prince. "*I* am the Prince who can neither read nor write, and I have got the sharpest sword in the world ; so come out of that, and let me kill you."

The dragon stopped flapping his wings, and looked at him, rather pathetically.

"Isn't it a little hard," he said, "that I should have to be killed for doing exactly as I wish to do? I am only too glad to come out of this horribly cold water, and I really don't see why I should be killed for it."

"Neither do I," observed the Prince, sheathing his sword. "And, now I come to think of it, my godfather never told me to kill anybody at all. It's very unusual, for, in all the stories I ever heard, the Prince always had to kill somebody."

"I've heard those stories, too," said the dragon ; "but all the Princes in them seem to have had fairy godmothers, instead of godfathers ; and godmothers always complicate things, if they can." By this time, he had waded to shore, and stood shivering
with

with cold, before the Prince. "Are you really going to kill me?" he asked, gloomily.

The Prince swung his arm round his head, and threw away the sharpest sword in the world; and it fell with a splash into the water, and disappeared from sight.

"No," he said; "I am never going to kill anybody again."

And the woodcutter stood before him, in the place of the dripping, dreary dragon.

"I knew you wouldn't," he remarked quietly. "Your godfather settled that, before you could speak. Now, we will go and look for my daughter."

They did not have far to go; for, on the spot where the sword had fallen, the beautiful girl had again appeared, in her green and white boat; and her laugh rang gaily across the motionless water.

"It is really quite a relief to be able to rest, at last," she said, as the Prince lifted her on to the shore, for the second time. "Tossing about perpetually on a river like that becomes a little wearisome, when one has done it for sixteen whole years."

"So does splashing about in the cold water, in all weathers," added the woodcutter, holding out his hands to her. "Do you not see who I am?"

"It is not easy to recognise one's father, all in a hurry, when he has been a dragon for so long," laughed his daughter.

The Prince was looking puzzled.

"What is the good of all these spells and things," he observed, reflectively, "when we might have met one another, without any trouble at all?"

"No good whatever," said the voice of his godfather, who had again suddenly arrived from nowhere at all. "But, if you had had a godmother, instead of a godfather, you would have had
twice

twice as many spells and things as I gave you. On the whole," he added, looking critically at the two lovers, "I think I have managed your love affairs very successfully."

"Oh, no," they both exclaimed at once. "You are surely mistaken. We managed our love affairs *quite* by ourselves. *You* only managed the spell that kept us apart."

"No doubt," chuckled the fairy godfather. "But who is going to manage the Queen of Nonamia?"

Their faces fell, for every one had completely forgotten the Queen of Nonamia. Then the Prince threw back his head, and put his arm round the woodcutter's daughter.

"Will you come home with me, sweetheart?" he asked her. "I am going to manage the Queen-Mother, myself."

"The boy is certainly my godson," laughed the fairy godfather; and he prepared to go back to the palace too, for he wanted to see the fun.

But the woodcutter shook his head. "I will stay where I am," he said; "and build a cottage for myself. I had quite enough of the Queen of Nonamia, sixteen years ago."

So the lovers went back to the palace, and the fairy godfather went with them. It was only reasonable to suppose that the Queen would be furious at the overthrow of all her plans; and the Prince trembled a little, in spite of himself, when he led his little betrothed before the throne.

"I have come back from the garden, on the other side of the wall," he said, quietly. "And I have brought my own princess with me. Don't you think she is far more beautiful than all those others you showed me?"

The courtiers whispered to one another, in admiration of her great beauty. Truly, there had never been so beautiful a woman in the court of Nonamia before. But the Queen stared at the

two lovers, and was speechless. And the fairy godfather looked on, and smiled.

Then the little betrothed looked up at her lover, and sighed.

"I am no princess, dearest," she said, with her eyes full of tears. "I am only a woodcutter's daughter. Does it mean that I must go away, and leave you?"

The courtiers stopped making remarks about her great beauty, and hoped that no one had heard them. And still, the Queen stared speechlessly before her; and still, the fairy godfather looked on, and smiled.

"What's the difference?" asked the Prince, in surprise. "Are not all women princesses? And, since you are the most beautiful of all women, then, surely, you must be the greatest of all princesses?"

"Oh no, dearest," sighed his betrothed, hanging her head, humbly. "I am no princess, and you will have to send me away."

Then the Queen spoke, at last. She looked at the fairy godfather, and slightly shrugged her queenly shoulders.

"You have won," she said. "My son will marry the woodcutter's daughter. And he shall marry her *now*, without any more fuss; and I have the honour to bid you to his wedding. I have said it!"

And the fairy godfather chuckled.

"At least," he said, "you are the most original Queen the world has ever seen!"

The wedding was decidedly original, too, for there were no preparations for it whatever. No one had time to order a new dress, and there was no cake; and the King knew nothing about it, until it was all over. But the Prince and his bride were quite oblivious of everything, except of one another; and when it was

all

all over, they went back to the river again, and helped the wood-cutter to build a house that was big enough for them all ; and there they took up their abode, and there they may be still, for all that anybody can tell.

"I don't want to be a king," the Prince declared. "I don't like killing things, and I hate stuffy rooms, and ceremonies, and stupid subjects. Besides, what more does Nonamia want than the Queen-mother?"

And that is all that Nonamia has ever had, for the Queen is still enduring the stupidity of the Nonamiacs, and the King still does what the Queen tells him.

And the fairy godfather?

When the wedding was over, the Queen sent for him ; and the impudence of such a proceeding so amused him, that he obeyed the summons at once, just as though he had not been a fairy godfather at all.

"Kindly tell me," said the Queen, "whether you really did give my son a christening present, or not?"

"I gave him the gift of being a true lover," replied the fairy godfather.

"Is that all?" exclaimed the Queen. "I need hardly have fetched you from Fairyland, just for that!"

"Your Majesty's originality is to blame," chuckled the fairy godfather. And he forthwith took the Queen's advice, and retired into private life.

But it is said that others have followed the example of the original Queen of Nonamia ; and that, now and then, a fairy godfather, who looks just like an ordinary person, is present at the christening of one or another of us. And, perhaps, that is why there are still some true lovers left in the world.

The Muslin Dress

By Mabel Dearmer



The Ūnka

By Frank Athelstane Swettenham, C.M.G.

THE other day I had to move from the house where I have lived for the last seven years, and in the consequent upheaval of accumulated rubbish—specially letters, papers, and books—I found a note, or, to speak accurately, two notes written on one sheet of paper, which brought vividly to my recollection an incident that occurred while I was living with one of the writers, Captain Innes of the Corps of Royal Engineers.

Innes and I had taken a house in Penang and had just moved into it. The house stood at the junction of two roads, it was surrounded by a large but neglected garden, and the place altogether resembled an Eastern Castle Rack-rent, an appearance partly due to the fact that it had not been occupied for some time. The garden was a veritable jungle ; but the house was large and roomy, approached by a rather imposing flight of steps which led into a great marble-paved hall, lighted by long narrow windows, glazed with small panes of glass. It was principally on this account that we named our new habitation the Baronial Hall.

I remember that the stables contained but three stalls, to accommodate Innes's one horse and my three ponies. I thought I might claim two of the stalls, but Innes's horsekeeper, a Sinhalese, in whom his master had more confidence than I had, insisted that

his horse was of a very superior breed, and must have one stall to stand in and another to sleep in, so I accepted the position and sent two of my ponies to live elsewhere. I cannot say that I felt all the compassion called for by the circumstances when, one night, some weeks later, as I was dressing for dinner, I heard a peculiar noise in the direction of the stable, and, looking out, I saw in the bright moonlight the Sinhalese, face-downwards, on the sand of the open space before the stable, while my pony, a not too good-tempered beast at any time, was apparently eating him and enjoying the process.

When we had rescued the horsekeeper and sent him to the hospital (where he remained a considerable time, and from which he returned happily drunk), I pointed out to his master that, if the wise old man understood the horse in his care, he was less well informed about the habits of my pony.

This incident, and the fact that Innes planted what should have been the lawn with guinea-grass, the favourite food of his too-pampered charger, are the only facts of any importance that I can remember, till the coming of the *ūnka*.

Ūnka is the Malay name for the tail-less monkey called by Europeans a Wah-Wah. I do not know where that name originated, but the creature makes a noise like the soft and plaintive repetition of a sound, that can be fairly put into letters thus—Wu', Wu'. When several *ūnka* get together in the jungle, in the early morning, they will sit in a high tree, in a circle, round one of their number, who pipes and sings and finally screams a solo of many variations, through which runs the simple *motif*, and, at a certain point, the others all join in, calling in loud and rapid tones—WU' WU' Wu' Wu' Wu' Wu'; the first two or three cries delivered shrilly and slowly, the others tumbling on each others' heels And then *da capo*, until the sun gets too hot, or they quarrel,

quarrel, or become too hungry or thirsty to go on; I cannot say for certain, for though I have watched and listened to the concert for a long time, I had not patience to wait till the end.

The *únka* is either black or fawn-coloured, he has extraordinarily long and strong arms and legs, a face of never-changing sadness, which may on occasion turn to an evil expression of vice and fury; but, in the main, the *únka* is a gentle and docile creature, easily tamed, and his only amusements seem to be, to swing himself with great leaps along a bar, to sing the Wu' Wu' song, or to sit in deep meditation, with his toes turned in, his head between his knees, and both hands clasped on the nape of his neck.

I was much shocked, one day, when I saw two small *únka* living in a tree in front of the house of a Malay headman. There was nothing very strange in the fact that these creatures should have been where they were, but, what was unusual to me, was to find that each was wearing a dress of cotton print, one blue and the other pink, with their heads appearing from the neck, their hands from the sleeves, and their legs—well, that was the worst of it, they were hanging by their feet, and I went away. As a rule, as I have already mentioned, they hang by their arms, but, then, with the exception of these orphans, I had never seen any *únka* in print gowns. It only shows how unwise it is to try and clothe all nationalities in the garments of Western civilisation.

Again, I remember an *únka* I used to know very well. He was a dissipated creature, and lived in a box on the top of a pole. There was a hole in a corner of the box, and into this used to be fixed a corked bottle of whisky and water, which gave the *únka* a good deal of trouble to pull out, but, once fairly in his hands, he made short work of the extraction of the cork and the consumption of the contents.

Then

Then he used to be told to come down, and, when he reached the ground, he would turn a succession of somersaults with a grace and agility that would have made a London street-arab green with envy. But I confess it was the last act of the performance that I most enjoyed; it was called "the bath." An old kerosene tin, one side of which had been cut away, was filled with water and the bath was placed on the ground in a suitable spot. As soon as it was ready, the *ūnka*, who had watched the preparations with careful interest, walked slowly up to the bath (by the way, they walk on their hind legs usually, and drink from their hands), and, standing at one end of the tin, gripped the sides of the bath, at a convenient distance, with both hands and then slowly, very, very slowly, went head foremost into the water, turning, as he did so, a complete somersault, his dripping woebegone face appearing gradually from out the water, as he arranged himself to sit comfortably, with his back against the end of the tin and his arms hanging over the sides, exactly as a human being might sit in a bath. The *ūnka* would recline thus, for about half a minute, looking the picture of extreme suffering and silent protest against the unfeeling laughter of the spectators. Then he suddenly jumped up, and springing with both feet on to the edge of the tin, gave a violent backward kick, that sent the water streaming down the hill and the bath rolling after it.

According to Perak tradition, the *ūnka* and another species of Simian, called *siāmang*, rather blacker and more diabolical looking than the *ūnka*, but otherwise not easily to be distinguished from the latter, lived originally in mutual enjoyment of the Perak jungles. Individuals of the two species quarrelled about precedence at a Court Ball, or a State Concert, probably the latter; the quarrel was espoused with great bitterness by all the *ūnka* and
all

all the *siámang*, and, when the other denizens of the forest were worried beyond endurance, by the constant bickerings, murders, and retaliations of these creatures, an edict was issued by which all the *únka* were compelled, for all time, to live on the right of the Perak River and the *siámang* on the left—neither being allowed to cross the river.

A friend of mine who lived on the right bank of the river and wished to test the truth of this legend, made pets of a very small *siámang* and a rather large *únka*, for whom places were laid and chairs put at every meal. They were not confined in any way and their manners were indifferent, for, though they were served with every course at each meal, they seemed to take an impish delight in pulling the dishes out of the hands of the servants who passed within their reach.

As my friend was writing one day at a large round table, on which a number of official letters were lying awaiting his signature, I saw the *siámang* climb, slowly and without attracting attention, on to the table, where, for a time, he sat without stirring, regarding my friend with earnest and sorrowful eyes. Then, by degrees, he gradually edged himself towards the inkstand, and, when quite close to it, dipped his hand into the pot and carefully wiped his inky fingers in a sort of monkey-signature on each of the beautifully prepared official despatches. When, at last, my friend discovered what the *siámang* had done, and made as though to catch and punish his tormentor, the small imp disappeared over the side of the table, making piteous little cries, and the *únka*, who had been watching the proceedings through the window, came in and hurried his companion on to the roof, where they always retired to concoct some new outrage.

In spite of these signs of original sin, the *únka*, concerning which I have made these casual references, were, on the whole,
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of amiable dispositions. My own experience was, alas ! to be with one of a different type.

A Governor whose term of office was up, had arranged with a Malay Sultan to send him two *ūnka*, to take to England, but, at the moment of his departure, as they had not then arrived, he asked me to take charge of them and forward them to London.

I consented, and, one morning a Malay appeared with a letter, and told me that the *ūnka* had been landed from the vessel in which he had brought them from a northern State, and were at my disposal. I was busy, and told the messenger to take them to the Baronial Hall. As he was leaving, the man said I should find that the smaller of the two had lost his arm at the elbow, an accident which had occurred on the voyage, for the cages had been placed within reach of each other, and the larger monkey who, as the man remarked, was rather wicked, had induced his small companion to shake hands with him, and then abused his confidence by twisting his arm off at the elbow.

When I got home in the evening I found the small *ūnka* looking very sick, and he died the next day ; but his murderer was a very fine specimen of the fawn-coloured *ūnka*, about two feet high as he sat on the ground, with an expression of countenance that I did not altogether like. However, he was allowed a certain length of cord, and lived in the coach-house, where I often went to see and feed him, and he received my advances, apparently, in good part. One day, however, he escaped, and I had to call in the services of two time-expired Indian convicts to catch him. The servants declined to have anything to do with him, and said he was very wicked and tried to bite them, even when they gave him food, so I determined to put him back in his cage. I anticipated no difficulty, but, as he hesitated to go in,
though

though everything had been done to make his cage look attractive, I put my hand on his back and applied a very gentle pressure. In an instant he turned round and bit me badly, in return for which I gave him a good beating and determined I would not trouble about him any more. I gave up my visits to him, but, whenever he saw me at any distance, even if it were through the venetians of a window, he would turn his back on me, seize one leg with both hands and, looking through his legs, make horrible faces in a way that I thought very rude and ungrateful.

After a fortnight he got away again. I felt it was more than likely that the servants had connived at his escape, and I was inclined to say with Mr. Briggs, "Thank God, he's gone at last."

I said that the Baronial Hall stood in the angle of two wide and much frequented roads. The front road boarded a picturesque bay of the sea, but, behind the house, was a large cocoanut plantation, and here the *únka* took up his quarters and lived for six months or more. Once, when I returned to the house after a week's absence, I found a crowd of half-caste boys throwing stones at the *únka*, who sat at the top of a cocoanut-tree and regarded them with far from friendly eyes. I sent the boys away, but I realised that the owner of the plantation might object to the *únka*, as he was probably doing, making free with the fruit of this grove.

I saw no more of my charge, and left Penang on a political mission to Perak, where I remained some time.

Landing, on my return, I went to the quarters of a friend who was the head of the Police Force, and he told me, amongst other news, that, only an hour before my arrival, some Eurasian boys had brought to him the *únka*, dead, and tied on a stick, saying that he had attacked them, and bitten one of their number very
badly

badly in the hand, and they had been compelled in self-defence to kill him. Henry Plunket (the Superintendent of Police) said that this was evidently not the whole truth of what had occurred, but the injured boy talked of claiming compensation from me, though, no doubt, the *Ūnka* had been made the victim of a combined attack. Bearing in mind what I had seen myself, some months before, I thought that was extremely probable, and, having inspected the body, a piteous object tied to a long stick by the ankles, while the arms had been pulled as far as possible above the head, and there fastened round the stick by the wrists, I went home, Plunket undertaking to get the *Ūnka* stuffed in an attitude of deep humility, with his formidable teeth carefully concealed.

Early the next morning a servant told me that two Eurasians wanted to see me. I told him to ask them in, and a boy and a man made their appearance. The boy's hand was in a sling, but otherwise he seemed well enough.

I said, "What can I do for you?"

The boy replied, "Your monkey has bitten me."

I remarked, "And you have killed the monkey."

There was a brief silence and I said, "Tell me how it happened."

"I was going home from school," said the boy, "walking along the high road in front of this house, when the monkey, who was sitting up in a cocoanut tree, caught sight of me and came down and bit me."

"What were you doing?" I asked.

"Nothing."

"How did the monkey get into the road?"

"He climbed through the hedge."

"Were you the only person on the road?"

"Oh, no; there were many others."

"Then

"Then why did he attack you?"

No answer.

"Is that all you have to say about it?"

"Yes."

"Then I wish you good-morning."

Here the man broke in with, "What are you going to give the boy?"

To which I replied, "Nothing, in the face of such a story as that. But what have you to do with it?"

"I have come as the boy's friend," he said, "and if you don't pay him compensation, he will sue you for damages."

"He must do what he thinks best," I said, "but I would advise him to prepare a more probable story than that he has just told me. Monkeys do not come down from the tops of cocoanut trees to bite inoffensive little boys who are walking on the high road."

Seeing there was nothing more to be got out of me my visitors departed, and I, forgetting the unspoken dislike of the *unka* for myself, mourned his loss, and felt satisfied he had been done to death by the boys of the neighbourhood.

At that time the judge of the Small Cause Court was a magistrate who had had a great deal of Indian experience before coming to Penang, and, a few days after my interview with the boy, this official called at my office, and said: "I want to have a few minutes conversation with you about a matter that concerns you personally."

I said, "Pray, sit down. I suppose the boy who was bitten by the monkey has been to you?"

"He has," said the magistrate, "and he wishes to summons you for damages."

"He is quite at liberty to do so," I said, "but I can't imagine
any

any one placing any credence in the cock-and-bull story about the monkey coming down out of the tree, and attacking him as he passed on the high road."

"Oh, but I assure you," said the man learned in the law, "that is not at all an improbable story. I knew a road in the Province so infested by monkeys that they used to come out of the jungle and snatch the baskets of fruit out of the hands of people going to market. No woman could pass there alone, and the men used to go in parties for mutual protection."

"Of course, if you know that," I said, without betraying the thoughts that were in me, "I have nothing more to say, but I have heard the details of what really occurred from an unbiassed spectator, whom I can produce as a witness, and the boy's story is very far from the truth."

"Then what is the true account?" said the magistrate, "for I shall not issue a summons without good cause shown."

"I am told," I said, "that this boy and another were playing in the cocoanut plantation, behind my house (not their plantation, by the way, they were trespassers), and the monkey was sitting in a high cocoanut tree hard by, watching the boys and thinking about nothing at all. The boys, as boys will, began to quarrel, and from abuse they soon came to blows. Now," I said, "when the monkey saw that he came down the tree."

"Ah! he came down the tree," broke in my friend.

"Yes," I said, "the man who saw it all says he came down the tree, but the boys continued to fight and took no notice of him. Then the monkey, who was a particularly intelligent beast and had lived with respectable people, felt he ought to interfere, because he knew it was wrong of boys to fight, and had seen them beaten for doing it. He, poor thing, could not speak to them, but he walked up, waving his hands like this"—here I suited the action

to

to the word—"as though he would say, 'Stop! you must not fight any more.'"

"What!" interrupted the magistrate, "he went like this!" as he repeated my action.

"Yes," I said, "so I am told by the man who saw it all. The monkey went close up to them in his anxiety, and then either the boys misunderstood him or, what seems more likely, they were really bad boys, and disliked the monkey's interference, for one of them, the boy who has been injured, slapped the monkey in the face."

"Slapped him in the face?"

"Yes," I said, "so the man says who told me the story. And then what could you expect? The monkey, finding his good intentions misinterpreted and himself made the subject of a cowardly assault, bit his assailant—bit him badly in the hand."

"Ah! he bit him in the hand?"

"Yes. And one must make some excuses for him," I said, "because, after all, one ought not to expect too much from a monkey."

"That," said my friend, as he got up and took his hat, "is an entirely different account to the one I heard, and I wish you good-morning."

"Of course, of course," I said, as I shook hands with him, "I thought you would like to know the facts." And, as I closed the door and resumed my seat, I fell a-musing on the curious ways of the *unka*, and the advantages to be gained by a long experience of monkeys.

For months I heard nothing more about the boy and his complaint, but some one told me that, when he went again to my experienced friend, he had been driven from the presence with what is called "a flea in his ear."

Without

Without my realising that the change meant anything to me, a new judge of the Small Cause Court arrived from England about this time, and replaced the Indian officer. The new comer, of course, knew nothing about monkeys, and when, just as I was starting on another expedition to the Malay States, I was served with a summons claiming damages for the injury done to Master Fernandez by a dangerous beast described as my property, I could only ask Innes to put the case in the hands of Counsel, and trust to my advocate's skill and the harmless, even pitiful appearance of the stuffed *ūnka*, whose counterfeit presentment I suggested should be produced in Court, as a last resort.

My journeyings took me finally to Singapore, where I told this veracious story, and consulted both the Chief Justice and Attorney-General, who assured me that I had no legal responsibility in the matter ; indeed, I did not quite understand how the complainant was going to prove that he had been bitten by my *ūnka* at all, or that I could be said to own, or keep, a creature that for six months had lived by his wits, in a neighbouring plantation. However, it is the unexpected which happens, and I tried to bear the news with fortitude when I received from Innes the following letter and its enclosure. I never quite made out what became of the stuffed *ūnka*, but I suppose he is preserved with the records of the case in the archives of the Penang Court.

“PENANG.

“23rd September, 18—.

“MY DEAR SWETTENHAM,

“You will gather from the enclosure that the monkey case has gone against us ; I'm awfully sorry, and did my best in the matter, I assure you. The Judge counselled a compromise after hearing Plaintiff's case and Bond's reply, and I thought it safest to take the hint. Bond, as you see, handsomely declines any fee. I have thanked
him

him on your behalf for his exertions and settled the bill, the amount whereof we can adjust with other matters. I confess I couldn't follow the Judge's train of thought, for the story didn't seem to me to tell well in the witness box.

"Yours truly,
"W INNES."

"18th September, 18 —.

"My DEAR INNES,

"As Swettenham's case was compromised at the suggestion of the Judge, I don't intend to make any charge against him for the little I did, so all he will have to pay will be \$22.95 costs and damages.

"Yours sincerely,
"I. S. BOND."

There must have been something peculiarly malignant about this *Anka*; the slightest connection with him proved fatal to so many people. The Sultan who gave him is dead, and the Governor who never received him; the Chief Justice and the Attorney-General who took a friendly interest in him; the magistrate who had such an experience of all his kind; the Counsel who defended him; my friend who supported him; and—I had almost forgotten—the man who really saw what happened to him. It is almost like the tale of the House that Jack built—a glorified Eastern version.

A Little Holiday

By Oswald Sickert

Roy had twice stayed with us in London during the vacation ; but since our days at Cambridge most of his time had been spent in Paris, and I had never been to his home till that spring.

I had eagerly looked forward to the visit, for not only should I enjoy Roy's company uninterruptedly for eight whole days, but I should at last meet his sister. And looking forward with curiosity and excitement to the sunny prospect, I had only seen on the clear horizon one little cloud—a certain fear I had of Roy's uncle. This uncle had lived with them even before the father's death, and had since acted as guardian to the two children, for their mother, his sister, was an invalid. He used to come up to Cambridge to see Roy, so I had met him frequently. I took a great fancy to him from the first, and he had my unbounded respect ; he was the ideal of steadfastness and honour and clear judgment. But I always experienced in his presence the same feeling—a feeling which no difference of age could explain. I was before him a person of no weight, of no principles, a butterfly character—he would have passed me on one side if I had not been Roy's friend. I felt just the same when I saw him after an interval of three years, although in between he had warmly praised my verses and had gone out of his way to write me from
time

time to time matters of encouragement. I was flattered that he should choose to keep up an unflagging correspondence—for though our letters did not pass at frequent intervals, they gave me a pleasant impression of continuity, showing that the silence of a month or two in no way weakened the thread of interest that had been spun between us. Our letters sometimes touched upon certain points in the working of the department which I had entered; but they were chiefly concerned with the writing of verses, and on the evening of my arrival I was emboldened, in the hope of assuring the ground beneath my feet, to ask him whether he did not think my last disquisition priggish, conceited, over-ignorant, slight. No, he did not think so at all; in fact, he had waited for my arrival in order to discuss the question more fully. And all the while I was talking of my own subject—something I could do and he couldn't, something he thought worth doing, my work, hard work—I yet felt a humbug. I felt so with a few other men, one or two even of my own age; but I did not like any of them so much as Roy's uncle. He was not sixty, a small man with one shoulder bigger than the other, almost a hump-back, and his red hair was turning grey.

I wondered whether he approved of Roy's great affection for me; I used even to think sometimes that he looked upon me as an adventurer, and then, in no spirit, I am sure, of pitting myself against my dear Roy, I would argue the point. Roy, it was true, was of an old family; he was rich (I had no idea they were so well off—it was a beautiful house). But there was nothing I could gain from him, and, as far as a career went, I was a good way ahead of him, for he had only just finished three years of study in a Paris studio.

Even if my uncomfortable sensation were pure fancy, even if he did really think there was a firm foundation in me, still I
thought

thought there must be some reason for my imagination to play me such tricks, and I could not discover it. Moreover, I was sure he liked me; he was more than polite, he made much of me; and every now and then we came very close to each other. He must have seen, too, how sincerely I revered him.

Roy's sister was enchanting—not quite so pretty as Roy. She was just seventeen. Roy told me she had a deep admiration for me, not only because I was his friend, but because she had heard I was very clever. For the first day or two this admiration stood in our way. Conversation with me was an honour which made her proud, a privilege not to be abused. The eight years which divided us were to her the whole difference between a grown man in the world and a child. She had been educated at home, and had seen very few people. But after a time our intercourse grew easier. No attempt of mine could have shaken the faith she had in my opinions. I was a genius: that was the point from which she started. Under the light she shed upon me, I was scrupulously careful of everything I said, everything I thought; I never felt so tender of any one. The touching faith and respect of the girl cast a spell over my stay with Roy, a penetrating softness.

Insincerity would have been impossible, as well as immoral, in the face of so much enthusiasm and trust, so I was most happy when we talked of men I wholly admired. I was safe when we were capping each other's praises of Shelley or Jane Austen; I was safe when I tried to make her share my love of Wordsworth. But it was more difficult when she started an admiration in which I could not join. She had learned from her uncle to love Ruskin, and one day, when we were walking up and down the garden alone, she asked me about him. I answered that I did not think I understood him properly—at least, I did not see his teaching as
a whole;

a whole ; in the end he might well turn out to be right, but just now I did not see him quite. She was swerving round already, and when she wanted me to explain why I did not like him, I suggested we should talk about him in the evening when her uncle was with us ; he knew much more about Ruskin than I did—he was sure to be right. But this modesty on my part only made her look upon my objections to Ruskin, whatever they might be, as certainly superior to any other opinions that could be held of him. I was peculiarly careful, when the time came, not to put my case, if I could help it, but to make the discussion as much as possible an exposition of Ruskin by her uncle. This was difficult, because he always deferred to me on questions of art, and Roy, who entirely agreed with me, let me do all the talking. And during our conversation that evening I experienced more acutely than ever the uneasy sensation of unworthiness, and all the time I was asking myself why I should feel a humbug. Were not plenty of men, men who knew, who knew better than Roy's uncle, convinced that Ruskin was mistaken about the points we were discussing ? And was not I speaking as little as possible, softening everything down, and agreeing with humility wherever he let me ? And I had read a great deal of Ruskin at one time, and my objections were of respectably long standing. I felt, too, all the more uncomfortable, because here I sat, extremely against my wish, helplessly seducing the niece he loved so from her pious opinions, the opinions she had learnt from him. I could not help it ; she was quite on my side, although I had tried not to take a side, and she disliked Ruskin more than I did.

I can hardly explain how much our conversations about Mill meant to me ; they were the best of all. When she first mentioned him I did little more than respect her sacred admiration, so natural to a girl of her age ; but gradually I was caught too. We

talked of him a great deal, more than of any one; with Shelley he was her chief hero. Mill had been one of the keenest admirations of my boyhood, and boyhood's opinions are far off at twenty-five. The men of my age were inclined to be condescending to Mill: our idea of a State had outgrown the limits of *Liberty*; his political economy—the whole science, indeed—was rather in disgrace, his *Logic* was perhaps amusing to read, but the style was stilted, and we had got far beyond his essays on religion, in fact, we were coming round the other side; and as I had no occasion to re-read any of his books, I acquiesced. I certainly should have shrunk from the notion of putting such a man in my thoughts near Flaubert or Tolstoy, for instance. But when we began to talk of his autobiography, I saw once more in its entirety the enthralling power the man had in my boyhood, the honesty that was almost lyrical, the sane and delicate intelligence, the peculiar love of truth, which would make him in all times, however far the world might progress, an ideal and adorable figure. I loved him once more, and it was heaven to follow her lead, and get back in all sincerity with the girl to this old enthusiasm, forgotten, slighted, while I was following in the train of superior art.

Once when we two were talking of Shelley—Mill's poet—Roy interrupted after a remark of hers:

"Why, Beatrice, I never knew you were so fond of reading."

"What else is there to be fond of?" she answered; and I too could think of nothing else at the moment.

On the second Sunday we had tea in the summer-house, and we meant to enjoy ourselves especially, because it was my last day. Beatrice had brought out paper and pencils, and we were going to write verses, or play on paper in any way we liked. At first we all played together, her jolly brother, my good friend, sitting opposite his sister and me. We fooled with writing in various

various pretty ways suited to the pretty girl, the summer-house, our high spirits. The more we wrote, the higher our spirits rose, till at last we were floating in a summery ether of butterflies and flowers and breezes, high above everyday prose, in a charmed world of fancy. I had never known the pen a magician's rod of this power. We made verses together, writing each a line and passing the paper round. Beatrice appeared in a light which plainly surprised her brother. Her imagination, her spirituality, burst into radiant life. Her strokes were by far the most brilliant, some of her lines were beautiful. A half-realised thought came into my head that of her own self such brilliant fancies would never have been called to her mind and her fingers, that it was our presence which made it possible for her—nay, that it was her neighbour; and so in the delicious atmosphere I felt that her inventions, though they often outstripped mine, were yet mine too.

We had made many such verses, and, as an empty sheet lay before me, a new idea struck me, and asking, "Who is this by?" I began to make up a line; but at the fifth word she had guessed. When it came to Roy's turn, and he was just writing the first word very large, that we might read it upside down, she stretched out her hand across the table and laid it on his paper, and, fearing lest she should not guess sooner than I, said without looking at me:

"But you must write very slowly and stop after each word!"

And that made me feel still happier in my neighbour; happy, too, that she only withdrew her hand a little way in her unfair rivalry, half-conscious surely that it would divide the attention of my eyes. At the third round she wrote two lines to make us laugh, not for the guessing, for the Chaucer could not be hid even in the first two words of her couplet; and laugh we did to see

Chaucer

Chaucer writing of that "Jewe abhominable" (Roy had dared a Heine verse, and we had talked of Heine in the morning, but Beatrice knew nothing of him herself). Roy cried out on "potence," it was not a Chaucer word. And that correction was the first sign of a change; for soon it came that he had slipped out of our game and only laughed with us, and then he pushed back his chair and began to draw us, and he almost faded from my mind, and the game lay between us two.

She followed where I led, and I started prose, beginning recklessly anyhow, without sense, not even imitating any one, but for the pleasure of the pompous words:

"Beneath him lay the valley of content, seawards bared by the salt wind, its few shorn trees scorched and bent inland, but upstream increasing in fulness until they thickened to the joyous orchard"—any large-mouthed nonsense that came into my head, And she followed, for now we had a whole sheet before us and two pencils, and she wrote on her side and I on mine. The thing began aimlessly, but sense came into it as we went on, and such an idyll grew up as has never been written, so full and free. At first there was much joking and many grotesque digressions compelling laughter; here and there, like notes passed by boys in class, there would come expostulations, enclosed in brackets—on her side.

"(A moment ago we were standing on the old mill bridge, watching the red cider-apples circling in the eddies and trying to break away down stream. How did we get to the top of this hill from which you see the minarets of the Golden City glittering in the morning sky?)"

"(Not the Golden City. I was thinking of the Crystal Palace from Campden Hill, where I went to school; but we'll come down again.)"

But

But soon the laughter passed out. Our two wits, sharpened to the keenest edge by the strange rivalry, were yet by this rivalry converging to meet. Only at the points where the love story grew too intense, the one of us whose turn it was would rest, prolonging the joy, putting off the inevitable meaning with some sentence of wayward description ; but even these interludes, and especially such as she wrote, bore a treasonable reflection of things which were around us ; and into the valley of our fancy there grew the lilacs which looked in at the summer-house, the wooden paling in front of the orchard, the sheep on the distant Surrey Hills.

She wrote the girl and I the man, and we kept to our proper spheres, until, as the love scene came to rapture, at the height of daring, the man said to the girl :

“And would you love me if I were a beggar ?” For though we were writing of to-day, the man had still upon him something of the heroic glory in an old tale. We were beyond all bounds, and had been caught up to a perilous height ; we were alone, and she had loved to make the man a wonder of manhood in her maiden’s eyes. But, even as I set down the question, I felt somewhere that it was a final madness to come to so close an inversion ; it was leaping with eyes wilfully shut from a dizzy precipice. On her column she wrote :

“The girl raised her eyes to her fairy prince, that he might read there that she gave him what no riches can buy.”

She turned her fearless eyes to me, and the first glance from them swept me down horribly to the world. What had I been doing ? how could anything so irrevocable have happened ? Deadness came over me and dragged me down, down. I never felt so completely on the earth, so immovably, hopelessly everyday. What would else have been a discomfort, or frightening even, was
now

now almost a relief—or at any rate I had reached the bottom—her uncle stood between us, and his presence did not surprise me. We had not heard his coming. His face was expressionless, his eyes were fixed on the paper before us. My hand almost moved forward to cover it; but she made no attempt at hiding, so I too kept still. Roy laughed in his jolly fashion, and cried out from his sudden proximity:

“Stop there, uncle, I’ll put you in too!”

The sheet was laden with love, I knew, and as my once more greyly critical eye caught a hateful sentence here and there, I would have hidden it from him, if only for vanity. However I did not fancy he was paying much attention to what was written, but was thinking: here is the adventurer doing what I feared most; winning the love of my little Beatrice, hardly past her childhood, the heiress—and under pretence of art. I was so hideously aware that I had never meant that, that I did not love her, or want to pretend I did, that I was not so base as he must think, and he stood so long without moving, that I murmured:

“We were only joking,” conscious, when the words had passed my lips, that they were despicable and the very bottom of cowardice, without knowing why. He had put his arm on his niece’s shoulder, and I knew she was leaning her head on his coat. He left us, he had not noticed me, and went over to Roy and looked at his drawing; I felt that his going to Roy and looking at the sketch had some connection with the reproachful disaster. I began:

“Surely your uncle is not really angry with us——” and then I went to the end of what I had started to say—“he must have seen we were only joking,” as if I were repeating words learned by rote; for when our eyes met once more, I saw she had not realised; and she did not know why I should be repeating the
meaningless

meaningless excuse I had given her uncle. And then—and then—Oh, I had not yet reached the worst, for she smiled and put out her hand as if to lay it on my arm, to comfort me in my evident distress ; it was her first impulse, it was all she thought of. I appealed to myself in dull agony, how was it possible I could resist that movement, why couldn't I at any rate pretend to love such a person, and leave it to time to make the pretence a reality ? Or rather, what did I matter here at all ? But I was lead. She rose from the table, and just then Roy came up to us and showed us his drawings, and we walked back to the house, her brother talking between us. She was silent and oppressed, her thoughts were turned inwards : the puzzle now began to weigh on her, she had started to question and solve it. She advanced us by a few steps as we neared the house, and I could think of nothing, only my spirit was straining forward to the girl's figure in front. I was dragging after her on my knees through the abject dust, and in my head the despairing excuse, a nightmare repetition, "we were only joking, we were only joking."

Roy was the sole cheerful one at dinner, and he and his uncle talked much as usual. Every now and again I felt Beatrice's eyes fixed on me. After dinner she went up to see her mother. Roy and I sat on, talking, and two hours later the door opened and let in a flood of light from the hall into our dark room, and Beatrice stood there. She did not come in, but said good-night, and hesitated a moment in the light, with one hand still resting on the door post and the other holding the handle ; and then she turned, and the door closed us into darkness again. Then another thing was revealed to me : I knew that even when she realised fully, no shadow of blame for me would cross her mind.

Next morning Roy and I carried out the cherished plan we
had

had made with so much pleasure long ago. We were to be at Mr. Gow's soon after sunrise, to breakfast there and feel the "nec requies" as the farm bestirred itself for another week's work, and thus warmed and elated ramble some six or seven miles to a railway station. I talked and simulated sympathy while my head was full of something else, and so these last morning hours of my visit served chiefly to assure me that my closest friend was now to be counted among those with whom I could not deal simply. It was still unwontedly early when I reached London and the office.

Saint Joseph and Mary

From a French Folk-Song

By Marie Clothilde Balfour

SAINT JOSEPH and Mary,
A-journeying went they :
Saint-Joseph and Mary, O gay !

A-don-don-delle :

A-journeying went they,
Noël !

When they came to the town,
They knew not where to stay :
When they came to the town, O gay !

A-don-don-delle :

They knew not where to stay,
Noël !

But a poor widow gave them
A stable where they lay :
A poor widow gave them, O gay !

A-don-don-delle :

A stable where they lay :
Noël !

" Now

Saint Joseph and Mary

"Now kind thanks, Dame Margaret,
Who turned us not away :
Now kind thanks, Dame Margaret, O gay !
A-don-don-delle :
Who turned us not away."
Noël !

"Unto thy prayers, Dame Margaret,
Ne'er shall be said Nay.
Unto thy prayers, Dame Margaret, O gay !
A-don-don-delle :
Ne'er shall be said Nay."
Noël !

Carrying her newborn Child,
Mary took her way.
Carrying her newborn Child, O gay !
A-don-don-delle :
Mary took her way.
Noël !

She met with a poor old man,
A-sowing of corn and hay.
She met with a poor old man, O gay !
A-don-don-delle :
A-sowing of corn and hay.
Noël !

"A fair

"A fair good-day to thee, Mary,
And to thy Child, good-day.
A fair good-day to thee, Mary, O gay!

A-don-don-delle :

And to thy Child, good-day."

Noël!

"Good man, where can I hide Him,
If danger come this way?
Good man, where can I hide Him, O gay!

A-don-don-delle :

If danger come this way?"

Noël!

"Wrap Him in yonder cloak,
My winter cloak of grey.
Wrap Him in yonder cloak, O gay!

A-don-don-delle :

My winter cloak of grey."

Noël!

"Go back to thy field, good-man,
'Tis time to cut thy hay.
Go back to thy field, good-man, O gay!

A-don-don-delle :

'Tis time to cut thy hay."

Noël!

"Nay,

"Nay, how can the crop be grown,
Or ever it be May?
Nay, how can the crop be grown, O gay!
A-don-don-delle :
Or ever it be May?"
Noël!

"Go seek thy sickle, good-man,
Thy corn is ripe to-day.
Go seek thy sickle, good-man, O gay!
A-don-don-delle :
Thy corn is ripe to-day."
Noël!

He turned him round and round,
He knew not what to say.
He turned him round and round, O gay!
A-don-don-delle :
He knew not what to say.
Noël!

The seed he had but sown,
Was corn all golden gay.
The seed he had but sown, O gay!
A-don-don-delle :
Was corn all golden gay.
Noël!

He

He took his sickle to shear it,
And lo, in piles it lay.
He took his sickle to shear it, O gay !
A-don-don-delle :
And lo, in piles it lay !
Noël !

The good-man gazed around,
And knelt him down to pray.
The good-man gazed around, O gay !
A-don-don-delle :
And knelt him down to pray.
Noël !

Now God be thanked for this harvest,
And for this happy day !
Now God be thanked for this harvest, O gay !
A-don-don-delle :
And for this happy day !
Noël !

The Jews came riding by,
They had a word to say.
The Jews came riding by, O gay !
A-don-don-delle :
They had a word to say.
Noël !

Saint Joseph and Mary

"Now tell us the truth, good-man,
So rich in corn and hay.
Now tell us the truth, good-man, O gay !
A-don-don-delle :
So rich in corn and hay.
Noël !

"Hast thou seen Maid Mary,
And her young Child to-day ?
Hast thou seen Maid Mary, O gay !
A-don-don-delle :
And her young Child to-day ?"
Noël !

Not since this field was sown,
Has Mary passed this way.
Not since this field was sown, O gay !
A-don-don-delle :
Has Mary passed this way."
Noël !

"Then back, turn back, my men,
For that was in last year's May.
Then back, turn back, my men, O gay !
A-don-don-delle :
For that was in last year's May."
Noël !

Alexander the Ratcatcher

By Richard Garnett, C.B., LL.D.

"Alexander Octavus mures, qui Urbem supra modum vexabant, anathemate perculit."—*Palatius. Fasti Cardinalium*, tom. 5, p. 46.

"**R**OME and her rats are at the point of battle!" This metaphor of Menenius Agrippa's became, history records, matter of fact in 1689, when rats pervaded the Eternal City from garret to cellar, and Pope Alexander the Eighth seriously apprehended the fate of Bishop Hatto. The situation worried him sorely; he had but lately attained the tiara at an advanced age—the twenty-fourth hour, as he himself remarked in extenuation of his haste to enrich his nephews. The time vouchsafed for worthier deeds was brief, and he dreaded descending to posterity as the Rat Pope. Witty and genial, his sense of humour teased him with a full perception of the absurdity of his position. Peter and Pasquin concurred in forbidding him to desert his post; and he derived but small comfort from the ingenuity of his flatterers, who compared him to St. Paul contending with beasts at Ephesus.

It wanted three half-hours to midnight, as Alexander sat amid
traps

traps and ratsbane in his chamber in the Vatican, under the protection of two enormous cats and a British terrier. A silver bell stood ready to his hand, should the aid of the attendant chamberlains be requisite. The walls had been divested of their tapestries, and the floor gleamed with powdered glass. A tome of legendary lore lay open at the history of the Piper of Hamelin. All was silence, save for the sniffing and scratching of the dog and a sound of subterranean scraping and gnawing.

"Why tarries Cardinal Barbarigo thus?" the Pope at last asked himself aloud. The inquiry was answered by a wild burst of squeaking and a clattering and scurrying to and fro, as who should say, "We've eaten him! We've eaten him!"

But this exultation was at least premature, for just as the terrified Pope touched his bell, the door opened to the narrowest extent compatible with the admission of an ecclesiastical personage of dignified presence, and Cardinal Barbarigo hastily squeezed himself through.

"I shall hardly trust myself upon these stairs again," he remarked, "unless under the escort of your Holiness's terrier."

"Take him, my son, and a cruse of holy water to boot," the Pope responded. "Now, how go things in the city?"

"As ill as may be, your Holiness. Not a saint stirs a finger to help us. The country-folk shun the city, the citizens seek the country. The multitude of enemies increases hour by hour. They set at defiance the anathemas fulminated by your Holiness, the spiritual censures placarded in the churches, and the citation to appear before the ecclesiastical courts, although assured that their cause shall be pleaded by the ablest advocates in Rome. The cats, amphibious with alarm, are taking to the Tiber. Vainly the city reeks with toasted cheese, and the Commissary-General reports himself short of arsenic."

"And

"And how are the people taking it?" demanded Alexander. "To what cause do they attribute the public calamity?"

"Generally speaking, to the sins of your Holiness," replied the Cardinal.

"Cardinal!" exclaimed Alexander, indignantly.

"I crave pardon for my temerity," returned Barbarigo. "It is with difficulty that I force myself to speak, but I am bound to lay the ungrateful truth before your Holiness. The late Pope, as all men know, was a personage of singular sanctity."

"Far too upright for this fallen world," observed Alexander, with unction.

"I will not dispute," responded the Cardinal, "that the head of Innocent the Eleventh might have been more fitly graced by a halo than by a tiara. But the vulgar are incapable of placing themselves at this point of view. They know that the rats hardly squeaked under Innocent, and that they swarm under Alexander. What wonder if they suspect your Holiness of familiarity with Beelzebub, the patron of vermin, and earnestly desire that he would take you to himself? Vainly have I represented to them the unreasonableness of imposing upon him a trouble he may well deem superfluous, considering your Holiness's infirm health and advanced age. Vainly, too, have I pointed out that your anathema has actually produced all the effect that could have been reasonably anticipated from any similar manifesto on your predecessor's part. They won't see it. And, in fact, might I humbly advise, it does appear impolitic to hurl anathemas unless your Holiness knows that some one will be hit. It might be opportune, for example, to excommunicate Father Molinos, now fast in the dungeons of St. Angelo, unless, indeed, the rats have devoured him there. But I question the expediency of going much further."

"Cardinal," said the Pope, "you think yourself prodigiously clever,

clever, but you ought to know that the state of public opinion allowed us no alternative. Moreover, I will give you a wrinkle in case you should ever come to be Pope yourself. It is unwise to allow ancient prerogatives to fall entirely into desuetude. Far-seeing men prognosticate a great revival of sacerdotalism in the nineteenth century, and what is impotent in an age of sense may be formidable in an age of nonsense. Further, we know not from one day to another whether we may not be absolutely necessitated to excommunicate that fautor of Gallicanism, Louis the Fourteenth, and before launching our bolt at a king, we may think well to test its efficacy upon a rat. *Fiat experimentum*. And now to return to our rats, from which we have ratted. Is there, indeed, no hope ? ”

“ *Lateat scintillula forsan*,” said the Cardinal, mysteriously.

“ Ha ! How so ? ” eagerly demanded Alexander.

“ Our hopes,” answered the Cardinal, “ are associated with the recent advent to this city of an extraordinary personage.”

“ Explain,” urged the Pope.

“ I speak,” resumed the Cardinal, “ of an aged man of no plebeian mien or bearing, albeit most shabbily attired in the skins, now fabulously cheap, of the vermin that torment us ; who, professing to practising as an herbalist, some little time ago established himself in an obscure street of no good repute. A tortoise hangs in his needy shop, nor are stuffed alligators lacking. Understanding that he was resorted to by such as have need of philters and love-potions, or are incommoded by the longevity of parents and uncles, I was about to have him arrested, when I received a report which gave me pause. This concerned the singular intimacy which appeared to subsist between him and our enemies. When he left home, it was averred, he was attended by troops of them, obedient to his beck and call, and spies had observed him
banquetting

banquetting them at his counter, the rats sitting erect and comporting themselves with perfect decorum. I resolved to investigate the matter for myself. Looking into his house through an unshuttered window, I perceived him in truth surrounded by feasting and gambolling rats; but when the door was opened in obedience to my attendants' summons, he appeared to be entirely alone. Laying down a pestle and mortar, he greeted me by name with an easy familiarity which for the moment quite disconcerted me, and inquired what had procured him the honour of my visit. Recovering myself, and wishing to intimidate him:

"I desire in the first place," I said, "to point out to you your grave transgression of municipal regulations in omitting to paint your name over your shop."

"Call me Rattila," he rejoined with unconcern, "and state your further business."

"I felt myself on the wrong tack, and hastened to interrogate him respecting his relations with our adversaries. He frankly admitted his acquaintance with rattery in all its branches, and his ability to deliver the city from his scourge, but his attitude towards your Holiness was so deficient in respect that I question whether I ought to report it."

"Proceed son," said the Pope, "we will not be deterred from providing for the public weal by the ribaldry of a ratcatcher."

"He scoffed at what he termed your Holiness's absurd position, and affirmed that the world had seldom beheld, nor would soon behold again, so ridiculous a spectacle as a Pope besieged by rats. 'I can help your master,' he continued, 'and am willing, but my honour, like his, is aspersed in the eyes of the multitude, and he must come to my aid, if I am to come to his.'"

"I prayed him to be more explicit, and offered to be the bearer of any communication to your Holiness.

"I will

“‘I will unfold myself to no one but the Pope himself,’ he replied, ‘and the interview must take place when and where I please to appoint. Let him meet me this very night, and alone, in the fifth chamber of the Appartamento Borgia.’

“‘The Appartamento Borgia!’ I exclaimed in consternation. ‘The saloons which the wicked Pope, Alexander the Sixth, nocturnally perambulates, mingling poisons that have long lost their potency for Cardinals who have long lost their lives!’

“‘Have a care!’ he exclaimed sharply, ‘You speak to his late Holiness’s most intimate friend.’

“‘Then,’ I answered, ‘you must obviously be the Devil, and I am not at present empowered to negotiate with your Infernal Majesty. Consider, however, the peril and inconvenience of visiting at dead of night rooms closed for generations. Think of the chills and cobwebs. Weigh the probability of his Holiness being devoured by rats.’

“‘I guarantee his Holiness absolute immunity from cold,’ he replied, ‘and that none of my subjects shall molest him either going or returning.’

“‘But,’ I objected, ‘granting that you are not the Devil, how the devil, let me ask, do you expect to gain admittance at midnight to the Appartamento Borgia?’

“‘Think you I cannot pass through a stone wall?’ answered he, and vanished in an instant. A tremendous scampering of rats immediately ensued, then all was silence.

“On recovering in some measure from my astounded condition, I caused strict search to be made throughout the shop. Nothing came to light but herbalists’ stuff and ordinary medicines. And, now, Holy Father, your Holiness’s resolution? Reflect well. This Rattila may be the King of the Rats, or he may be Beelzebub in person.”

Alexander

Alexander the Eighth was principally considered by his contemporaries in the light of a venerable fox, but the lion had by no means been omitted from his composition.

"All powers of good forbid," he exclaimed, "that a Pope and a Prince should shrink from peril which the safety of the State summons him to encounter ! I will confront this wizard, this goblin, in the place of his own appointing, under his late intimate friend's very nose. I am a man of many transgressions, but something assures me that Heaven will not deem this a fit occasion for calling them to remembrance. Time presses ; I lead on ; follow, Cardinal Barbarigo, follow ! Yet stay, let us not forget temporal and spiritual armouries."

And hastily providing himself with a lamp, a petronel, a bunch of keys, a crucifix, a vial of holy water, and a manual of exorcisms, the Pope passed through a secret door in a corner of his chamber, followed by the Cardinal bearing another lamp and a naked sword, and preceded by the dog and the two cats, all ardent and undaunted as champions bound to the Holy Land for the recovery of the Holy Sepulchre.

II

The wizard had kept his word. Not a rat was seen or heard upon the pilgrimage, which was exceedingly toilsome to the aged Pope, from the number of passages to be threaded and doors to be unlocked. At length the companions stood before the portal of the Appartamento Borgia.

"Your Holiness must enter alone," Cardinal Barbarigo admonished, with manifest reluctance.

"Await my return," enjoined the Pontiff, in a tone of more confidence

confidence than he could actually feel, as, after much grinding and grating, the massive door swung heavily back, and he passed on into the dim, unexplored space beyond. The outer air, streaming in as though eager to indemnify itself for years of exile, smote and swayed the flame of the Pope's lamp, whose feeble ray flitted from floor to ceiling as the decrepit man, weary with the way he had traversed and the load he was bearing, tottered and stumbled painfully along, ever and anon arrested by a closed door, which he unlocked with prodigious difficulty. The cats cowered close to the Cardinal; the dog at first accompanied the Pope, but whined so grievously, as though he beheld a spirit, that Alexander bade him back.

Supreme is the spell of the *genius loci*. The chambers traversed by the Pope were in fact adorned with fair examples of the painter's art, mostly scriptural in subject, but some inspired with the devout Pantheism in which all creeds are reconciled. All were alike invisible to the Pontiff, who, with the dim flicker of his lamp, could no more discern Judæa wed with Egypt on the frescoed ceiling than, with the human limitation of his faculties, he could foresee that the ill-reputed rooms would one day harbour a portion of the Vatican Library, so greatly enriched by himself. Nothing but sinister memories and vague alarms presented themselves to his imagination. The atmosphere, heavy and brooding from the long exclusion of the outer air, seemed to weigh upon him with the density of matter, and to afford the stuff out of which phantasmal bodies perpetually took shape and, as he half persuaded himself, substance. Creeping and tottering between bowl and cord, shielding himself with lamp and crucifix from Michelotto's spectral poniard and more fearful contact with fleshless Vanozzas and mouldering Giulias, the Pope urged, or seemed to urge, his course amid phantom princes and cardinals, priests and courtesans, soldiers and serving-

serving-men, dancers, drinkers, dicers, Bacchic and Cotyttian workers of whatsoever least beseeemed the inmates of a Pontifical household, until, arrived in the fifth chamber, close by the, to him, invisible picture of the Resurrection, he sank exhausted into a spacious chair that seemed placed for his reception, and for a moment closed his eyes. Opening them immediately afterwards, he saw with relief that the phantoms had vanished, and that he confronted what at least seemed a fellow-mortal, in the ancient rat-catcher, habited precisely as Cardinal Barbarigo had described, yet for all his mean apparel, wearing the air of one wont to confer with the potentates of the earth on other subjects than the extermination of rats.

"This is noble of your Holiness—really," he said, bowing with mock reverence. "A second Leo the Great!"

"I tell you what, my man," responded Alexander, feeling it very necessary to assert his dignity while any of it remained, "you are not to imagine that, because I have humoured you so far as to grant you an audience at an unusual place and time, I am going to stand any amount of your nonsense and impertinence. You can catch our rats, can you? Catch them, then, and you need not fear that we shall treat you like the Pied Piper of Hamelin. You have committed sundry rascalities, no doubt? A pardon shall be made out for you. You want a patent or a privilege for your ratsbane? You shall have it. So to work, in the name of St. Muscipulus! and you may keep the tails and skins."

"Alexander," said the ratcatcher composedly, "I would not commend or dispraise you unduly, but this I may say, that of all the Popes I have known you are the most exuberant in hypocrisy and the most deficient in penetration. The most hypocritical, because you well know, and know that I know that you know, that you are not conversing with an ordinary rat-catcher: had
you

you deemed me such, you would never have condescended to meet me at this hour and place. The least penetrating, because you apparently have not yet discovered to whom you are speaking. Do you really mean to say that you do not know me?"

"I believe I have seen your face before," said Alexander, "and all the more likely as I was inspector of prisons when I was Cardinal."

"Then look yonder," enjoined the ratcatcher, as he pointed to the frescoed wall, at the same time vehemently snapping his fingers. Phosphoric sparks hissed and crackled forth, and coalesced into a blue lambent flame, which concentrated itself upon a depicted figure, whose precise attitude the ratcatcher assumed as he dropped upon his knees. The Pope shrieked with amazement, for, although the splendid Pontifical vestments had become ragged fur, in every other respect the kneeling figure was the counterpart of the painted one, and the painted one was Pinturicchio's portrait of Pope Alexander the Sixth kneeling as a witness of the Resurrection.

Alexander the Eighth would fain have imitated his predecessor's attitude, but terror bound him to his chair, and the adjuration of his patron St. Mark which struggled towards his lips never arrived there. The book of exorcisms fell from his paralysed hand, and the vial of holy water lay in shivers upon the floor. Ere he could collect himself, the dead Pope had seated himself beside the Pope with one foot in the grave, and, fondling a ferret-skin, proceeded to enter into conversation.

"What fear you?" he asked. "Why should I harm you? None can say that I ever injured any one for any cause but my own advantage, and to injure your Holiness now would be to obstruct a design which I have particularly at heart."

"I crave your Holiness's forgiveness," rejoined the Eighth
Alexander,

Alexander, "but you must be aware that you left the world with a reputation which disqualifies you for the society of any Pope in the least careful of his character. It positively compromises me to have so much as the ghost of a person so universally decried as your Holiness under my roof, and you would infinitely oblige me by forthwith repairing to your own place, which I take to be about four thousand miles below where you are sitting. I could materially facilitate and accelerate your Holiness's transit thither if you would be so kind as to hand me that little book of exorcisms."

"How is the fine gold become dim!" exclaimed Alexander the Sixth. "Popes in bondage to moralists! Popes nervous about public opinion! Is there another judge of morals than the Pope speaking *ex cathedra*, as I always did? Is the Church to frame herself after the prescriptions of heathen philosophers and profane jurists? How, then, shall she be terrible as an army with banners? Did I concern myself with such pedantry when the kings of Spain and Portugal came to me like cats suing for morsels, and I gave them the West and the East?"

"It is true," Alexander the Eighth allowed, "that the lustre of the Church hath of late been obfuscated by the prevalence of heresy."

"It isn't the heretics," Borgia insisted. "It is the degeneracy of the Popes. A shabby lot! You, Alexander, are about the best of them; but the least Cardinal about my court would have thought himself bigger than you."

Alexander's spirit rose. "I would suggest," he said, "that this haughty style is little in keeping with the sordid garb wherein your Holiness, consistent after death as in your life, masquerades to the scandal and distress of the faithful."

"How can I other? Has your Holiness forgotten your Rabelais?"

"The

"The works of that eminent Doctor and Divine," answered Alexander the Eighth, "are seldom long absent from my hands, yet I fail to remember in what manner they elucidate the present topic."

"Let me refresh your memory," rejoined Borgia, and, producing a volume of the Sage of Meudon, he turned to the chapter descriptive of the employments of various eminent inhabitants of the nether world, and pointed to the sentence :

"LE PAPE ALEXANDRE ESTOYT PRENEUR DE RATZ." *

"Is this indeed sooth?" demanded his successor.

"How else should François Rabelais have affirmed it?" responded Borgia. "When I arrived in the subterranean kingdom, I found it in the same condition as your Holiness's dominions at the present moment, eaten up by rats. The attention which, during my earthly pilgrimage, I had devoted to the science of toxicology indicated me as a person qualified to abate the nuisance, which commission I executed with such success, that I received the appointment of Ratcatcher to his Infernal Majesty, and so discharged its duties as to merit a continuance of the good opinion which had always been entertained of me in that exalted quarter. After a while, however, interest began to be made for me in even more elevated spheres. I had not been able to cram Heaven with Spaniards, as I had crammed the Sacred College—on the contrary. Truth to speak, my nation has not largely contributed to the population of the regions above. But some of us are people of consequence. My great-grandson, the General of the Jesuits, who, as such, had the ear of St. Ignatius Loyola, represented that had I adhered strictly to my vows, he could never have come into
existence,

* *Pantagruel*, book xi. ch. 30.

existence, and that the Society would thus have wanted one of its brightest ornaments. This argument naturally had great weight with St. Ignatius, the rather as he, too, was my countryman. Much also was said of the charity I had shown to the exiled Jews, which St. Dominic was pleased to say made him feel ashamed of himself when he came to think of it ; of my having fed my people in time of dearth, instead of contriving famines to enrich myself, as so many Popes' nephews have done since ; and of the splendid order in which I had kept the College of Cardinals. Columbus said a good word for me, and Savonarola did not oppose. Finally I was allowed to come upstairs, and exercise my profession on earth. But mark what pitfalls line the good man's path ! I never could resist tampering with drugs of a deleterious nature, and was constantly betrayed by the thirst for scientific experiment into practices incompatible with the public health. The good nature which my detractors have not denied me was a veritable snare. I felt for youth debarred from its enjoyments by the unnatural vitality of age, and sympathised with the blooming damsel whose parent alone stood between her and her lover. I thus lived in constant apprehension of being ordered back to the Netherlands, and yearned for the wings of a dove, that I might flee away and be out of mischief. At last I discovered that my promotion to a higher sphere depended upon my obtaining a testimonial from the reigning Pope. Let a solemn procession be held in my honour, and intercession be publicly made for me, and I should ascend forthwith. I have consequently represented my case to many of your predecessors : but, O Alexander, you seventeenth-century Popes are a miserable breed ! No fellow feeling, no *esprit de corps*. *Heu pietas ! heu prisca fides !* No one was so rude as your ascetic antecessor. The more of a saint, the less of a gentleman. Personally offensive, I assure you ! But the others were nearly as bad.

The

The haughty Paul, the fanatic Gregory, the worldly Urban, the austere Innocent the Tenth, the affable Alexander the Seventh, all concurred in assuring me that it was deeply to be regretted that I should ever have been emancipated from the restraints of the Stygian realm, to which I should do well to return with all possible celerity ; that it would much conduce to the interests of the Church if my name could be forgotten ; and that, as for doing anything to revive its memory, they would just as soon think of canonising Judas Iscariot."

"And therefore your Holiness has brought these rats upon us, enlisted, I nothing doubt, in the infernal regions ? "

"Precisely so : Plutonic, necromantic, Lemurian rats, kindly lent by the Prince of Darkness for the occasion, and come dripping from Styx to squeak and gibber in the Capitol. But I note your Holiness's admission that they belong to a region exempt from your jurisdiction, and that, therefore, your measures against them, except as regards their status as belligerents, are for the most part illegitimate and *ultra vires*."

"I would argue that point," replied Alexander the Eighth, "if my lungs were as tough as when I pleaded before the Rota in Pope Urban's time. For the present I confine myself to formally protesting against your Holiness's unprecedented and parricidal conduct in invading your country at the head of an army of loathsome vermin."

"Unprecedented !" exclaimed Borgia. "Am I not the modern Coriolanus ? Did Narses experience blacker ingratitude than I ? Where would the temporal power be but for me ? Who smote the Colonna ? Who squashed the Orsini ? Who gave the Popes to dwell quietly in their own house ? Monsters of unthankfulness !"

"I am sure," said Alexander the Eighth, soothingly, "that my predecessors'

predecessors' inability to comply with your Holiness's request must have cost them many inward tears, not the less genuine because entirely invisible and completely inaudible. A wise Pope will, before all things, consider the spirit of his age. The force of public opinion, which your Holiness lately appeared to disparage, was, in fact, as operative upon yourself as upon any of your successors. If you achieved great things in your lifetime, it was because the world was with you. Did you pursue the same methods now, you would soon discover that you had become an offensive anachronism. It will not have escaped your Holiness's penetration, that what moralists will persist in terming the elevation of the standard of the Church, is the result of the so-called improvement of the world."

"There is a measure of truth in this," admitted Alexander the Sixth, "and the spirit of this age is a very poor spirit. It was my felicity to be a Pope of the Renaissance. Blest dispensation ! when men's view of life was large and liberal ; when the fair humanities flourished ; when the earth yielded up her hoards of chiselled marble and breathing bronze, and new-found agate urns as fresh as day ; when painters and sculptors vied with antiquity, and poets and historians followed in their path ; when every benign deity was worshipped save Diana and Vesta ; when the arts of courtship and cosmetics were expounded by archbishops ; when the beauteous Imperia was of more account than the eleven thousand virgins ; when obnoxious persons glided imperceptibly from the world ; and no one marvelled if he met the Pope arm in arm with the Devil. How miserable, in comparison, is the present sapless age, with its prudery and its pedantry, and its periwigs and its painted coaches, and its urban Arcadias and the florid impotence and ostentatious inanity of what it calls its art ! Pope Alexander ! I see in the spirit the sepulchre destined for *you*, and
I swear

I swear to you that my soul shivers in my ratskins ! Come, now ! I do not expect you to emulate the Popes of my time, but show that your virtues are your own, and your faults those of your epoch. Pluck up a spirit ! Take bulls by the horns ! Look facts in the face ! Think upon the images of Brutus and Cassius ! Recognise that you cannot get rid of me, and that the only safe course is to rehabilitate me. I am not a candidate for canonisation just now ; but repair past neglect and appease my injured shade in the way you wot of. If this is done, I pledge my word that every rat shall forthwith evacuate Rome. Is it a bargain ? I see it is ; you are one of the good old sort, though fallen on evil days."

Renaissance or Rats, Alexander the Eighth yielded.

"I promise," he declared.

"Your hand upon it !"

Subduing his repugnance and apprehension by a strong effort, Alexander laid his hand within the spectre's clammy paw. An icy thrill ran through his veins, and he sank back senseless into his chair.

III

When the Pope recovered consciousness he found himself in bed, with slight symptoms of fever. His first care was to summon Cardinal Barbarigo, and confer with him respecting the surprising adventures which had recently befallen them. To his amazement, the Cardinal's mind seemed an entire blank on the subject. He admitted having made his customary report to his Holiness the preceding night, but knew nothing of any supernatural ratcatcher, and nothing of any midnight rendezvous at the Appartamento Borgia. Investigation seemed to justify his nescience ; no vestige of the man of rats or of his shop could be discovered ; and the Borgian apartments, opened, and carefully searched through,
revealed

revealed no trace of having been visited for many years. The Pope's book of exorcisms was in its proper place, his vial of holy water stood unbroken upon his table ; and his chamberlains deposed that they had consigned him to Morpheus at the usual hour. His illusion was at first explained as the effect of a peculiarly vivid dream ; but when he declared his intention of actually holding a service and conducting a procession for the weal of his namesake and predecessor, the conviction became universal that the rats had effected a lodgement in his Holiness's upper stories.

Alexander, notwithstanding, was resolute, and so it came to pass that on the same day two mighty processions encountered within the walls of Rome. As the assembled clergy, drawn from all the churches and monasteries in the city, the Pope in his litter in their midst, marched, carrying candles, intoning chants, and, with many a secret shrug and sneer, imploring Heaven for the repose of Alexander the Sixth, they were suddenly brought to bay by another procession precipitated athwart their track, disorderly, repulsive, but more grateful to the sight of the citizens than all the pomps and pageants of the palmiest days of the Papacy. Black, brown, white, grey ; fat and lean ; old and young ; strident or silent ; the whiskered legions tore and galloped along ; thronging from every part of the city, they united in single column into an endless host that appeared to stretch from the rising to the setting of the sun. They seemed making for the Tiber, which they would have speedily choked ; but ere they could arrive there a huge rift opened in the earth, down which they madly precipitated themselves. Their descent, it is affirmed, lasted as many hours as Vulcan occupied in falling from Heaven to Lemnos ; but when the last tail was over the brink the gulf closed as effectually as the gulf in the Forum closed over Marcus Curtius, not leaving the slightest inequality by which any could detect it.

Long

Long ere this consummation had been attained, the Pope, looking forth from his litter, observed a venerable personage clad in ratskins, who appeared desirous of attracting his notice. Glances of recognition were exchanged, and instantly in place of the ratcatcher stood a tall, swarthy, corpulent, elderly man, with the majestic, yet sensual features of Alexander the Sixth, accoutred with the official habiliments and insignia of a Pope, who rose slowly into the air as though he had been inflated with hydrogen.

"To your prayers!" cried Alexander the Eighth, and gave the example. The priesthood resumed its chants, the multitude dropped upon their knees. Their orisons seemed to speed the ascending figure, which was rising rapidly, when suddenly appeared in air Luxury, Simony, and Cruelty, contending which should receive the Holy Father into her bosom.* Borgia struck at them with his crozier, and seemed to be keeping them at bay, when a cloud wrapt the group from the sight of men. Thunder roared, lightning glared, the rush of waters blended with the ejaculations of the people and the yet more tempestuous rushing of the rats. Accompanied as he was, it is not probable that Alexander passed, like Dante's sigh, "beyond the sphere that doth all spheres enfold;" but, as he was never again seen on earth, it is not doubted that he attained at least as far as the moon.

* Per aver riposo

Portato fu fra l'anime beate
Lo spirto di Alessandro glorioso;
Del qual seguio le sante pedate
Tre sue familiari e care ancelle,
Lussuria, Simonia, e Crudeltate.

Machiavelli. Decennale Primo.

Two Drawings

By Patten Wilson

- I. A Pathway to the Moon.
- II. A Silverpoint.



Natalie

By Renée de Coutans

THE room was dark, but the door had purposely been left wide open into the hall, and the furniture and her father's and mother's big bed were dimly visible. Natalie lay snugly curled upon herself like a soft kitten, in her white bedstead with high white bars round it, that she might not fall out.

The most beautiful music she had ever heard her mother play rose from the drawing-room, and she was listening to it in a half-sleepy, half-wakeful enchantment. *Tum—ta tum, ti tum, tum*—her mother went over the passage, over and over again. The phrase was so vehement, so strong, she felt a little afraid; yet it pleased her very much. *Tum—ta tum, ti tum, tum, tum*—then followed a shower of pearls, rubies, water-drops; over and over again her mother played this too, until the liquid, jewelled notes seemed to ripple from her fingers. Then she went back, and combined the two passages, and then repeated them many times. Yet Natalie did not tire of listening, and each time her ear flew to the opening bar before her mother's fingers had returned to it.

Suddenly, poor Natalie was dissolved in tears. The piano now rose in a phrase so exquisitely sweet, searching, tender, so vibrant of pitiful love, that this little girl of six was pierced with its emotion;

emotion ; she trembled, and a needle-like pain darted from her breast to her heart.

She wept quietly while her mother played and repeated the phrase. Each time it seemed to enclose her in a more delicious and more intimate emotion ; it spoke into her ear a wish to suffer, yet be happy. At the same time her child mind was puzzling and wondering. "Why do I cry?" she asked herself, "and why is the pain a pleasure?" She fell asleep still wondering, with those tears of pain and pleasure on her rosy cheeks, long before her mother had ceased playing.

At tea-time the next day, called to the drawing-room, she begged her mother in a whisper, and though there were strangers, to play what she had played the night before. But when her mother did so, seeming pleased and proud that Natalie had asked, to her surprise the music gave her neither the pleasure nor the pain of yesterday. The notes spoke melodiously, plaintively, but in a vaguer way. And their meaning spread out, she seemed to notice, over the other people in the room, as though each one took a parcel of it which might have been all hers, had she been lying alone upstairs in the half darkness in her little bed.

Days passed before Natalie heard her mother play again, and she ceased to wonder at her new experience. But one evening, when she had had her warm bath, had been cosily tucked in bed and kissed, her mother passed downstairs to the drawing-room, and she heard her strike some chords at the big piano which stood close to the door leading to her father's study. Natalie, drowsily enjoying the comfort of her bed, seemed to see her mother beside the piano, shining and lovely in her blue evening-gown. She could see the open study-door, and her father reading by the light of the pretty silver lamp with the green shade. Then, *Tum—ta tum, ti tum, tum tum*—and in a moment the rippling notes fell
down

down the keyboard. *Tum*—ta tum, ti *tum*, tum tum—her mother was not practising this time. How beautifully she played, Natalie thought. On and on she went. Then the phrase of despairing loveliness, and it seemed to Natalie she had lost the whole world—father, mother, beauty, sunshine—even her Grimm's fairy book. The grieving melody sent the same sharp thrill to her heart. On her mother went, through other and still other phrases, brooding of a mystery which quivered through and all about Natalie's bed ; she seemed floating in a region of fearful anguish and of great joy.

A wail rose above the music, and the sound of sobbing. "Mother, mother," Natalie cried, in a voice that struck through her mother's heart, "I cannot bear it, I cannot bear it—oh, do not play it any more!" Yet soon Natalie was sleeping and smiling peacefully, the faint trace of tears wiped away with kisses, resting on her cheeks. Mothers have such cunning ways of knowing how to soothe and comfort !

Natalie never heard her mother begin again that beautiful but dangerous *Tum*, ta tum, ti *tum*, tum tum. Sometimes she wondered why her mother never played it, but she never dared to ask, and slowly the music faded, faded from her thoughts.

Many years after, one day, the same piercing thrill went through her breast again, exquisitely, and again pain and joy were intimately commingled, and she trembled and shed tears of heavenly anguish. And all the world seemed to throb with mysteries too great to understand. Then suddenly came a memory of music, and of the little Natalie listening from her white bed while her mother played. And she knew why poor Natalie had wept and trembled, and why the music of a poet's love had been a music too great for her little child's soul to bear.

The Burden of Pity

By A. Bernard Miall

WALK straitly in your ways, O sweet,
For very pity of my love ;
There is one pathway for your feet,
One valley in cool hills above,
A way that I sought out for you
In dreams, because my love was true.

Belovèd, will you think that God
In His own shape had fashioned man,
And watched the path His creature trod
That ended foul, that fair began ;
With great love, though His eyes were dim
For pity ; could you weep for Him ?

But I a perfect image wrought
Of all I would have had you be
In likeness of my holiest thought :
And you have grown less fair to see,
And I more pitiful than God,
Knowing the way you might have trod.

Yet

Yet I will deem your heart as pure
As I have wished it every day,
And call each fault the signature
Of pain that came and passed away;
And I will love you more, my sweet,
For every stain on those white feet.

And every wound shall be a mouth
To sing of what you should have grown
Did winds blow ever from the south,
If you had never been alone:
My love, that came too late to aid,
For pity shall be threefold made.

Yet, wild rose that the wind has flawed,
But else more fair than all your kind,
O snowflake on white eyelids thawed
To leave a falling tear behind,
O wherefore are you not complete,
Or, being ruined, wherefore sweet?

Far Above Rubies

By Netta Syrett

OLD Dr. Hilcrest's little house on the Bushberry Road, just outside Crewford Village, had a new tenant, and Crewford was shaken to its foundations with excitement and expectation.

All Crewford had so long been "led to the grave," as Briggs the town-crier somewhat unfortunately expressed it, by old Dr. Hilcrest, and his spectacled nose and white beard had become such indispensable features in the village, that the inhabitants were thrown into a state of incredulous amazement at the news of his projected retirement. Scarcely had they time to recover breath from the astounding intelligence, before the newcomer was actually upon them. "A boy, a mere boy, too!" as Miss Saunders exclaimed to another maiden lady, her bosom friend. "Scarcely seven-and-twenty I should think. My dear Sophy, it is hardly—delicate!"

Crewford, however, was not long in making the discovery that the young doctor was an acquisition. The children of Mr. Miles, the lawyer, who lived opposite Miss Saunders, and were conveniently stricken with measles the very day of his arrival, disobediently flattened their noses against the windows to watch for his coming, and began to laugh before ever he shook his fist

at them from the gate ; and Miss Saunders herself implored her friend to have no scruples about consulting him for bronchitis. "He is steady as a churchwarden, my dear, and has the dignified manner of a man of sixty," was her verdict.

His little study in the small, old-fashioned house, where his bachelor predecessor had lived so many years, looked very pleasant and cosy one October evening, about a month after his arrival.

The chintz curtains were close drawn : there were a bright fire, a pair of slippers warming on the rug, and a large armchair drawn up close to the fender, in which lay a half-smoked pipe. The doctor was taking books out of a large packing case, and putting them on to the shelves which lined the room. When the last volume was in its place, he pushed the box aside, and sinking luxuriously into the big chair, took off his boots, and thrust his feet into the warmed slippers. He dropped the boots with a thud beside the fender, stooped for his pipe, relighted it, and sank back with a sigh of relief, puffing contentedly. His eyes travelled about the room, resting now on a picture, newly hung, now on the gay flowered curtains. The fire flickered and murmured softly, and little ruddy gleams danced on the wall, and bright, sudden flashes were reflected in the old-fashioned, low-hanging glass opposite.

Strong was pleasantly tired by the long day's round, and the little room seemed to him the embodiment of warmth and comfort. Lounging in the big chair, his head thrown back, his slippered feet thrust out towards the blaze, and his hands in his pockets, he gazed dreamily at the blue smoke wreaths from his pipe, and allowed his thoughts to stray over the past few years. He was young—Miss Saunders had rather over, than understated his age, in putting him down as seven-and-twenty—but
already

already he looked back upon much hard, uphill work. The son of a poor clergyman, the education necessary to fit him for the profession of his choice, had been acquired at the price of much personal self-denial, and, as he also recognised, of considerable sacrifice at home. A troubled contraction of the brows, was the outcome of a remembrance of his father's thin, stooping figure bending over his books in the shabby little library at the Devonshire Vicarage.

His college days at Cambridge, and afterwards as a student at Guy's, marred as they were by the necessity of looking at every halfpenny spent on pleasure, were almost forgotten in the vivid memory of the June afternoon when Mollie Kendall first came to the rooms he shared with her brother. Mollie and he had been engaged now four years. Four years of incessant, untiring work on Strong's part, had resulted in the country practice for which his old father had with difficulty advanced the money, and though he recognised the inevitable struggle before him, he was undaunted. Fortune had hitherto favoured the brave; there was no reason for doubting a continuance of her kindness.

He rose presently, with a yawn, and began to whistle softly, out of sheer content. He looked very boyish as he lounged about the room arranging his few possessions—photographs, a vase or two—on the mantel-piece or window ledge. The study was not yet completely furnished, and this evening arrangement of books and pictures was a never ending satisfaction to him. He altered the position of one photograph many times before deciding on its destination, and then took it down once more and stood a moment with it in his hand, looking at it. When he replaced it, it was with a gentle touch. His whistling ceased.

"Next year, perhaps—certainly next year, I should think," was in his mind. He tossed paper and envelopes out of the table drawer,

drawer, and sat down to write and tell her. The letter was a long one; Mollie read parts of it next day more than once, and smiled and blushed, and put the paper to her lips, and then re-read the account of his new patients with considerable, if somewhat abated, interest.

He had been called in by the Gilmans, at the Court, to attend one of the maids, he wrote; they were the richest people in the neighbourhood; it was a good connection, in fact, and the Gilmans themselves seemed rather jolly.

Strong had recalled Mrs. Gilman as he mentioned her name with a momentary feeling of curiosity. He had only exchanged half-a-dozen words with her, and she was not pretty, but she had certainly a curious charm of manner.

Mrs. Gilman stood by the window in her drawing-room some days later, and, half concealed by the heavy velvet curtains, watched the doctor's dog-cart whirl down the drive. She did not return to the fire till the last flash of wheels had disappeared round the bend by the lodge. Then, with a little shiver, she pulled the curtain further over the window, and turned away, a smile struggling ineffectually with a somewhat pronounced yawn, as she came back to the sofa. She pulled the cushions on to the floor close to the fire, and threw herself down upon them, leaning back against the couch. A half-opened book lay upon the padded arm of the sofa, just above her head. She stretched a lazy hand for it, found it was out of reach, and indifferently abandoned the effort.

Nestling more luxuriously among the cushions, she clasped her slender hands round her knees, and looked dreamily into the fire.

Occasionally a little amused smile robbed her face for a moment of its jaded expression, but her listless attitude, the droop of her shoulders,

shoulders, and a restless movement of her head now and again, spoke eloquently of hopeless, unmitigated boredom.

The room in which she sat, though small—Barbara Gilman hated big rooms—was furnished luxuriously. The folds of the heavy curtains over doors and windows gleamed in the firelight, which flashed also on the silver toys with which the many small tables were loaded, on the shining cushions tossed on the floor, and on the fragile china and glass of the tea-table.

Mrs. Gilman glanced at the linen-covered tray on which the tea-cups stood, and at the almost empty cake basket, and smiled again.

"He was a very unsophisticated boy—and awfully amusing when he talked with so grave an air about Dawson's tiresome illness—just as though it wasn't sufficiently annoying to have one's maid ill, with the hunt ball coming on and not a rag to wear, without discussing her stupid symptoms by the hour! However," Mrs. Gilman shrugged her shoulders with a sensation of lazy satisfaction, "we drifted pretty far from Dawson's cough before tea was over."

"I really didn't know such men existed in this age," she told herself, her thoughts wandering languidly. "John-Bullism I know, and decadence (in the happy day in town), but what is this? It's the sort of thing one used to read about in stories that were not oblivious of the young person. High ideals, youthful enthusiasms, innocence—or is it ignorance—of evil? They are all such exhausting things in their way, but how curious to find them combined in one individual—and that a man. Really one might almost derive a new sensation from the study of such a being. And a new sensation *here*, of all places in the world! No, it's certainly not to be despised."

She moved a little to shield her face from the fire, and then turned

turned her head, her quick glance lighting now on one, now on another part of the room. She regretted she had not bought a white-and-gold screen she had seen in town, for the corner by the door, and determined to send for it. She remembered, too, a wonderful Eastern jar, of green metal, the colour of a peacock's neck with the sun upon it; but there was no place for it. She satisfied herself that every niche of the room was occupied before turning with a dissatisfied air to the fire again. There was absolutely nothing more to be bought for the room, unless she made a thorough change in its style, and turned out the present furniture. She entertained the idea for a moment, but it was too much trouble to think out, and her vague plans drifted aimlessly for a breathing space, and dissolved, and she yawned again. Life was a dull affair, and things were only desirable till one obtained them. How she had longed for pretty rooms and dainty clothes to wear and delicious things to eat, in the old day, at home, in the shabby little villa at Wandsworth. Well! a miracle had happened, or so it had seemed to her, on her engagement to Jim Gilman, and now she had her heart's desires. Were they disappointing? Yes—but they were also well worth keeping. A hastily summoned vision of the draughty dining-room at Eglantine Villa, of the roast mutton and boiled rice puddings at the mid-day dinner, assured her of this. Mrs. Gilman was always frank with herself. Her material advantages were well worth keeping, even at the price of playing the part of the affectionate wife, a rôle which in itself was irksome. Still, as she reflected, every one pays in some form or other for cakes and ale, and Jim, though straightforward and good to the point of exhaustion, was providentially dense in proportion—and he was out a great deal, and there were always visits to town, and—Mrs. Gilman smiled quietly, and twisted the rings on her white fingers, without

without pursuing reflection further, at this point. But visits to town were far too infrequent, and in the meantime here she was mewed up in a wretched country house, and Jim hated visitors, and if you wanted to rely on a man's good nature it wasn't safe to urge things he disliked, too frequently—and then her thoughts all at once drifted to the doctor again.

"He was awfully puzzled," she told herself. "I can't think why I didn't laugh! I wonder what he thought of me?"

As a matter of fact, Strong was thinking of her at the moment: sitting frowning in his armchair, holding an extinct, half-forgotten pipe listlessly in his right hand. The mixture of admiration and instinctive repugnance which coloured his thoughts as he recalled her, could she have divined his mental state, would probably have filled her with a half-resentful sense of flattered vanity.

The sound of whistling, followed by the answering, hoarse bark of dogs, roused her from her lazy musing. She rose slowly from her nest among the cushions, stretching herself daintily, with soft, slow movements, which recalled the action of a graceful little cat, reluctantly leaving the warmth of the fire. She picked up the pillows, and threw them hastily in their right positions on the sofa, and then crossed the room to a high-backed chair, on which an embroidered work-bag hung. She had taken out its contents, a strip of needle-work, and was bending over its intricate meshes with an absorbed air, before the door opened.

"Hullo, little woman! how cosy and domestic you look."

A breath of upland air entered the room with the man who stood in rough shooting-suit and gaiters, on the threshold. His face was bronzed with daily exposure to rain, sun, and wind, and an outdoor atmosphere surrounded him like an exhalation.

"I can come in, I suppose? I'm not very dirty," he assured her, glancing at his thick laced boots. "This room always
makes

makes me feel a clumsy brute," he said, sinking down in an arm-chair opposite his wife. "A sort of rhinoceros in a parrot's cage !"

"Thank you," she murmured, with a little grimace. "What pretty similes you choose, Jim."

He laughed.

"They were never my strong point, I admit—but it's a very nice little parrot."

He got up, crossed the room to where she was sitting, and bending down, playfully pinched her ear.

She raised her face with a smile full of wifely devotion, and he stooped to kiss her.

"Had visitors?" he asked presently, with a glance at the still uncleared tea-table.

"No. Oh! yes—I forgot," she added, carelessly rising to ring the bell. "Dr. Strong came in; he called to see Dawson, you know."

"Ah! What sort of fellow is he?" He took a piece of cake out of the basket as he spoke, and placed a large crumb on the nose of the terrier, which had followed him into the room. "Trust!"

"Oh! a nice boy, I think. He's very attentive—seems to think Dawson's had rather a severe touch of influenza."

"Paid for!" Milman exclaimed, and the dog seized the cake with a snap of his jaws.

"We'd better ask him to dinner, Bab."

"Yes, I suppose we must," she replied, going on with her needlework.

Strong's fears with regard to the seriousness of the maid's illness were not unfounded. A sharp attack of pleurisy followed the

the influenza, and, as a consequence, his visits at the Court grew more and more frequent.

Mrs. Gilman was generally standing in the hall as he came downstairs.

Behind her lithe, graceful figure, framed in the heavy drapery round the doorway, there was a glimpse of the richly scented, little room, glowing warmly in the firelight.

"Do you think she is better?" was her usual, anxious question; it was accompanied by a necessary, upward glance at the doctor who stood on the stairs above her.

"Come in and tell me about her." And then Strong followed her into the room, and sat down on the divan drawn up close to the fire, before which stood the tea-table, with its white, fringed cloth and burden of dainty silver.

By the end of the month he had spent many half hours in Mrs. Gilman's drawing-room.

The thought of them and of his hostess, remained with him during the long evenings he spent in his own little study, smoking and gazing into the fire, with Mrs. Gilman's red hair against a background of emerald-green cushion, vividly present to his imagination.

Strangely enough, he did not think less often of Mollie Kendall. She was as clearly present in his mind, when he recalled the little room at the Court, as was Mrs. Gilman.

Indeed, he never thought of one woman without the other; they were inseparable, incongruously linked in his thoughts. It was, could he conceivably have expressed the situation in metaphor, as though he held bound together a violet, fragrant, blue-eyed, breathing frankly its story of English woods, of streams babbling through deep moss, of the children's ringing laughter and a fantastically delicate orchid, scentless, mysterious, its pale lips closed.

Strong

Strong was perplexed and baffled. Unfitted as his downright objective nature made him for the task of mental analysis, he strove, with an almost pathetic honesty, to unravel the web of conflicting sensations which, he felt uneasily, grew more involved as time went on.

Two things were, however, clear to him. One, that he was not in the faintest degree in love with Mrs. Gilman; the other, that his love for Mollie, his tenderness for her, his desire for their marriage, were intensified by his involuntary habit of constantly contrasting her with the woman who shared his thoughts of her.

This conviction seemed to him to make it unnecessary to contrive any means of lessening his intimacy with the Gilmans, a course which, in view of the fact that the Court people were the acknowledged leaders of the neighbourhood, would have been in the highest degree impolitic. Nevertheless, and he was glad to feel assured of this, he would have risked any loss to his position through taking such a step, if he had felt it necessary.

He knew nothing of the modern claim for the imperative, almost sacred nature of impulse; he knew, indeed, little of modern thought on any social subject, partly because of the engrossing, objective character of his work, but chiefly, perhaps, that his nature was so opposed to its teaching, that it was not so much that he failed to assimilate, or entirely rejected it, as that he passed it by unheeding.

He did not understand his own hesitation in accepting the Gilmans' hospitality, and he was vaguely irritated by his own undefined, irrational scruples.

Why in the world should he not value the acquaintance of a clever woman of the world, who drew his thoughts from their accustomed channels, and forced them to recognise that there

were other paths worthy to be followed? Paths that led in the direction of art and literature, as well as towards science. It was good for him to talk to her, he argued; he was narrow, it was the fault of his profession, he acknowledged it, and wished for a wider outlook.

At this point, the point where a little of the modern atmosphere he ignored would have saved him, his reflections invariably ran off the right track. To his unsophisticated intelligence, Mrs. Gilman was brilliant, witty, profound, simply because he had never had an opportunity of comparing her counterfeit coin—the catch-words, the allusive jargon, the borrowed paradoxes and epigrams of a modern school—with what was its genuine claim to brilliance and distinction. It is easy to make a cheap glitter for a man of Strong's type, and Mrs. Gilman practised the economies for which no alternative was possible. He was, moreover, so flatteringly dazzled by paste that, in any case, diamonds would have been sinfully thrown away upon him.

Such as it was, however, her conversation represented for Strong the only culture obtainable in Crewford, and he strove to consider the fact powerful enough to account for the influence she undoubtedly exercised upon him.

But in his heart of hearts, when he began patiently to sift motives and emotions, he knew this did not solve the mystery of the attraction which drew him day after day to her room.

"Confound it!" he found himself exclaiming, half aloud, one evening. "What is it? I don't care for her. Good heavens, no!" with a short laugh. "I believe I—rather dislike her than otherwise."

He paused a moment, pondering over the idea, and dismissed it with another bewildered laugh, as one more insoluble problem.

"Don't even know whether I dislike her? Hang the woman,
any

any way, she occupies too much of my time. I won't see so much of her," he resolved suddenly; "the girl's all right now. I can make that the excuse."

With the determination, his perplexities at once vanished. He looked at Mollie's photograph for a moment before going in search of his candle, and a very tender, boyish smile came to his lips before they framed themselves for the soft whistling which meant that his mind was at rest.

"What do you and I care for any stupid woman, little girl!" he would have said, had Mollie herself been there to hear him.

"She is much better," he said, following Mrs. Gilman, the next day, into the drawing-room, after his visit to the maid. He stood talking by the mantel-piece, as though in readiness to go as soon as necessary conversation should be over. "I think if I look in again on Thursday or Friday I needn't trouble you again. She will do now, if you take care of her for a little while. She oughtn't to begin work for a week or two. If you could send her home for a fortnight, or——"

"Two lumps?" Mrs. Gilman interrupted. She held the sugar suspended over the tea-cup, and glanced up at him.

He hesitated.

"I really oughtn't to stay, I haven't made an end of work for to-day," he began.

"But tea is one of the pleasures of life," she returned, passing the cup to him, "not a mere duty to be scrupulously avoided."

There was a moment's pause before he took the usual low chair near the fire, with a laugh.

Mrs. Gilman helped herself to one of the tiny cakes out of the cake basket.

"I always

"I always associate you with that chair, or the chair with you—whichever you consider the prettiest way of putting it," she said, with a little movement of her head towards Strong. She addressed him in the slow, lazy voice in which one intimate friend might speak to another.

"It seems quite natural for you to be there. And this is practically your last visit; I'm sorry. I shall miss our talks." There was the faintest note of sadness in the last words. She lifted the cup to her lips, set it down untasted, and gazed a moment absently into the fire.

Strong flushed, and moved a little uneasily, glanced furtively at her, and was glad that at the moment she was so obviously unconscious of him.

"Yes," he said, awkwardly, "we seem to have talked a great deal. I was a regular ignorant Philistine before you took me in hand, Mrs. Gilman, and I'm afraid I haven't made much progress in spite of your teaching. I've ordered some of the books you talk about, though, and I'm trying to cultivate a taste for art; but—I'm really awfully sorry—I still prefer my old hunting pictures to Whistler. I'm afraid you'll have to give me up as a bad job. I'm not a quick pupil."

She turned her head slowly, and let her eyes dwell for a moment on his face.

"You are an interesting one," she said, wistfully. "I have so enjoyed our talks. I"—she paused, hesitated a little, and dropped her eyes—"I am rather lonely. Don't quite forsake me." She looked up at him again, with a half-pleading, half-smiling glance, and her voice was a little tremulous.

Strong's heart beat quicker.

"I shall be glad to come whenever you ask me," he murmured. There was a short silence.

His

His eyes were riveted in a sort of fascinated gaze on her half-averted face.

He was thinking, confusedly, how wonderfully she was dressed, and how Mollie would tease him about his efforts to describe what she wore. Her gown seemed to him a mist of soft, yet brilliant colour, the firelight flashed on the jewelled girdle at her waist, and her white hands, clasped on her lap, lay like gathered lilies on a bed of dimly glowing flowers. What was it that made her face so attractive? It was not pretty, even framed as it was in low, falling masses of glorious red hair—not pretty, but curiously fascinating. Her eyes were beautiful, yet he had hitherto always thought it was the expression of her eyes that repelled him.

“How is the little lady!” she asked at last, turning sharply to him. Her voice had regained its accustomed half-mocking brightness. The trend of Strong’s reflections was suddenly deflected.

Instinctively he resented the tone of the inquiry, and drew himself up a little stiffly before replying, “She is well, I believe.”

She raised her eyebrows ironically.

“*You believe!*—you know you write every day. And how soon are you going to act Benedick to her Beatrice?”

“Not so soon as I could wish,” he replied, putting the cup down on the table.

“You intend to hug your chains, I see,” she returned, leaning her head back against the cushion with a nestling movement with which he had grown familiar.

He did not reply, and she sat turning the rings on her finger absently, and looking into the red heart of the fire.

Strong wished to rise, make some excuse about work, and go, but something irresistibly impelled him to sit watching her.

The

The droop of her mouth, and her downcast eyes gave him an odd uncomfortable sensation. She moved at last with a half sigh.

"I want you to see these," she said at last, rising as she spoke and moving slowly towards the mantel-piece.

She drew an envelope from behind a little clock, and took some photographs from it.

"They have just come home. Do you think they are like me?" she asked, leaning over her shoulder at Strong, who rose and followed her to the mantel-piece.

He took them from her and examined them one by one.

"Well, what do you think of them?" she asked, softly. She was standing close to him, and as she bent over the photographs her thick, wavy hair touched his hand. Strong withdrew it hurriedly.

"They are charming," he said, with an effort, and laid them on the mantel-piece.

She gave a little, low laugh of half-caressing mockery.

"You are not going to ask for one? What a good boy! Now see virtue rewarded."

She chose the prettiest, and held it towards him, raising her eyes at the same time.

They were brilliant with laughing mockery, and something else which for one sudden moment sent the blood to his heart. Her rich hair fell low against her faintly flushed cheek, the fragrant folds of her dress brushed his hand. For one second he stood penetrated by her rare tantalising beauty before an irresistible impulse seized him, and he bent swiftly, drew her to him, and kissed her.

She drew back, but kept her eyes on his face, and then in one brief moment, with all his faculties quickened, intensified by the
swift

swift reaction from sudden passion, Strong read intuitively Barbara Gilman's history of the past few weeks.

The flash penetrated the obscure recesses of his own mind at the same moment, and in the pitiless glare he saw what had before been hidden from him—the secret of her influence. It was miserably, ludicrously simple after all. As he looked at the woman before him, he recognised that in spite of the fact that accident had made her the honoured wife of a man near his own rank in life, she belonged, by nature, to a class which she herself probably held in virtuous contempt and horror.

It was one of those moments of mutual revelation when speech is recognised as a clumsy, unnecessary middleman between soul and soul.

As she looked at him, Mrs. Gilman's eyes slowly dilated. Their expression of half insolent triumph faded. Resentful anger took its place. This boy, who, lacking all the qualities that go to the making of a man of the world, had filled her with contemptuous amusement—this boy, dared to despise her.

Her forehead contracted into a sudden frown.

"What are you thinking about?" she asked sharply, the words involuntarily escaping her lips.

Strong still kept his eyes on her face. He was pale. She noticed that he looked all at once years older.

"I think I had better not tell you," he replied deliberately, taking up his hat.

She flushed.

"I thought you might have been considering an apology," she said with dangerous coldness, "but I don't think you need trouble. No apology, however abject, could atone for your disgraceful conduct. Please go." She pointed to the door.

Strong

Strong continued to look at her, without changing his expression.

"Nevertheless, I apologise," he said quietly. "It is a man's rôle to offer an apology, I believe."

She drew a deep breath.

"I am sorry I cannot accept it. It is perhaps fair to warn you that I never conceal anything from my husband," she added over her shoulder, as Strong moved towards the door.

He bowed, turning with his hand on the door-handle, and the faintest smile on his lips. As he walked down the hall, the smile deepened unpleasantly, and he wondered vaguely that he could at the moment find her icily virtuous demeanour so grimly comic.

She saw the smile, and her lips whitened. Her heart beat fast for anger. He was master of the situation. She, a woman of the world, had been out-matched and despised by a green boy ! The photograph she had given him lay on the mantel-piece. She snatched it up with a sudden movement, tore it again and again, and flung it on to the fire.

She stood motionless a moment, gazing at the leaping flames, her eyebrows drawn together, then, in a frenzy of rage, she struck her hand against the marble side of the fireplace.

It was bruised, and the pain brought tears to her eyes, as she put it to her lips in a fury of self-pity. There was a step outside, the door-handle was turned, and her husband entered.

"All in the dark, Bab !" he called cheerfully, stumbling against a chair.

She turned from the fire, and went swiftly to meet him, breaking into sobs.

Then, as he caught her in his arms with incoherent, wondering, soothing words, she clung to him, caressing him.

"Oh ! I wanted you so badly," she murmured through her tears.

tears. "You dear Jim—you dear Jim, don't be angry, will you? I want to tell you something—something dreadful!"

* * * * *

Two months later, Strong stood by the window in his dismantled study, reading a letter in the waning light of a December afternoon.

The same packing-cases that had lumbered the room three months before, stood again on the skirting against the wall. They were full of pictures and books. The walls were bare; the tables without covers. A travelling-rug and a half-filled portmanteau lay on the floor. His face, thrown into relief by the light that entered through a side window, was terribly altered. It had the grey pallor that comes of anxiety and suspense. There were hollows in his cheeks, and the hand that held the paper nearer to the light, trembled like the hand of an old man. The letter was from his sister, giving him particulars of his father's death. It was incoherent, as words written under the strain of grief usually are, but the keynote of the letter was struck in the stress she laid on the fact that her father seemed to make no effort to rally from his illness, when he heard that Strong was giving up the Crewford practice. "He was weak before, of course," she wrote with unintentional cruelty, "but when he heard the news, he seemed utterly crushed and broken, and hardly spoke again. I did all I could to keep from him the reports we hear about you, and the reason you are leaving Crewford, but ill news flies, Jack, and we couldn't help hearing the gossip. I have not heard from Mollie, since Major Kendall went down to Crewford a week ago. Do write plainly—but it doesn't seem to matter now father has gone."

There was more of the letter, but he threw it down unfinished with a laugh.

"No,

"No, it really doesn't matter," he repeated half aloud, and began to search in a leather case which he took from his breast-pocket for another letter which he knew by heart. It was a broken-hearted little note from Mollie. He glanced through it, crumpled the paper fiercely in his hand, and then smoothed it again to read the last sentence.

"We sail for India to-morrow. Father's leave is over and he insists on taking me out with him; we shall not come home for years. I dare not think of it—I hope I shall die before——"

Strong looked again at the date. She had sailed the previous day.

He drew a chair up slowly before the empty table and deliberately tore both letters, Mollie's and his sister's into shreds. He took great pains to fold the paper exactly, and apparently gave his whole mind to the task. When they were reduced to a heap of infinitesimal fragments, he rose, opened the window, and scattered them to the wind. The white scraps whirled and eddied over the bare rose bushes before the window, and drifted like flakes of snow on to the earth at their roots. When the last flake was at rest, he closed the window softly, as though some one lay dead in the room, turned the key in the lock, stooped over the portmanteau a moment, and took from it something which he put on the table.

There were a few trifles still unpacked on the mantel-piece, and he turned to it and began to collect them mechanically and place them neatly in the packing-case. He surprised himself in the act, and laughed aloud. What would packing-cases and pictures matter in a few moments? He turned over the last photograph and glanced at it. It was of his sister. As he looked, his left hand slid over the table, feeling for what he had laid there. He grasped it presently, and stood a full minute looking from it to the
portrait

portrait in his other hand. All at once with a groan, he flung the pistol from him, and at the same time dropped the photograph savagely into the packing case.

"Damn it!" he muttered. "A fellow mustn't even die. He's got to live, and to try and keep a sister he doesn't care for out of the workhouse."

* * * * *

Five or six years later, Mrs. Gilman was driving down Piccadilly. There was a crush at the corner of Bond Street, and the carriage drew up close to the curb. As she sat idly watching the passers-by, she saw with a start of recognition Strong's face amongst them. He stopped at the edge of the pavement, waiting to cross, and in a moment their eyes met. Involuntarily, with a woman's instinct, she glanced first at his clothes, as the best source of information as to prosperity, or the reverse. He was as well dressed as she remembered him at Crewford, years ago, and, as she noticed this, her heart began to beat fast with a sense of resentful anger. He was doing well then after all. His eyes were still fixed upon her, and she forced herself to meet his gaze. Once more, as in the drawing-room at the Court five years ago, their long look was eloquent. She saw before her a man prematurely aged, his face lined, with work perhaps, possibly with suffering, though of that she could not guess. All traces of the boy had vanished; it was a calm, inscrutable face, the lips closely pressed together, the eyes steady and quiet. He looked full at her, calmly, indifferently even, and as she returned his glance the flame of anger flared more fiercely. She had robbed him of life's joys, it was true, but he had conquered—she felt it. Again he was master of the situation. His look, too impersonal to be even critical, scorched her.

With a swift, violent movement she leant forward in the carriage.

"Drive

"Drive on," she called savagely to the man, who started, flicked the horses suddenly, and they plunged forward, narrowly escaping the wheels of a hansom. Before she was whirled past him, she saw for the second time in their acquaintance the ghost of a smile upon his lips. Her face was white as she leant back in the corner of the victoria, her hands clenched under the carriage rug.

The same evening she and her husband were in the private sitting-room of their hotel at Westminster. She was putting some feathery branches of chrysanthemum into tall jars about the room. Two or three of the flowers, flame-coloured, with long, curling petals like the tentacles of some sea creature, lay on the table. These she presently took up, and fastened at her waist in the loose folds of her evening dress. The harmony of the gorgeous colour of the flowers with the gown she wore, gave the supreme perfecting touch to her appearance.

Her husband sat in an arm-chair by the fire, a cigarette between his fingers, and watched her. She felt the admiration in his eyes and turned to him lingeringly, with the slow smile which never failed of the effect she intended, in whatever direction it was bestowed.

He rose immediately, put his arm round her, and turned her face up to his.

"'Pon my word, I believe you are prettier than when I married you, Bab!" he declared with an awkward laugh.

She touched his cheek with her hair, and stood a moment while he stroked it tenderly, then gently moved away.

"Middleton's late," he observed, with a glance at the clock.

"Yes," she returned, carelessly, "but there's really plenty of time."

"I heard

"I heard something about that fellow, you know who I mean—Strong—to-day," he said presently, after a short silence.

She half-turned her head, then paused, and reached for a fan on the mantel-piece.

"Yes?" she said, indifferently.

"The brute's doing better than he deserves, though that's not saying much," he went on, his face darkening. "He's scraped some sort of practice together in some God-forsaken suburb—Hackney or Clapton, I believe—and his sister's keeping house for him."

"How did you hear?" She was shielding her face from the fire with the fan she held.

"Dr. Danford was talking about him, curiously enough, after dinner last night. It seems one of his children met with an accident—thrown from a pony or something—and was taken into Strong's place."

There was a pause while Gilman puffed in silence, a frown gathering.

"Danford spoke enthusiastically of the chap," he went on after a moment, knocking the ashes from his cigarette; "says he's bound to come to the front. He's read a paper before some medical congress or other that's considered pretty brilliant. Confound our smooth, oily, nineteenth-century manner of doing business like this," he broke out fiercely. "What wouldn't I give to have put a bullet through him that time, instead of being driven to ruin his practice by making the place too hot to hold him! One can't let one's wife's name get bandied about, though. One has to keep her out of it—that's the worst of it," he added, gloomily, "or else——"

"Why do you talk about him! What does it matter?" she asked, vehemently, rising and crushing the fan in her hand as she spoke.

spoke. How she hated the man! The sound of his name brought vividly before her the quiet, indifferent glance he had that morning bestowed upon her. It roused once more the fury of impotent anger with which she recognised her utter powerlessness to affect him. And Jim, of course, blundering idiot that he was, must needs remind her. "I hate the subject," she exclaimed. She was trembling, and her voice shook.

Her husband was on his feet in a moment.

"What a fool I am!" he said, seizing her hand. "Poor little girl, how could I remind you! You are too good for me, Bab," he murmured tenderly, bending over her. "I ought to have realised what a good woman feels when a brute like that dares to insult her. But we'll never speak of it again, dear."

She lifted her face for his kiss, and then gently disengaged herself as a man's voice became audible outside.

As she turned her head, an almost imperceptible smile curled her lip, and she laid her hand for one second against the front of her low gown, where she felt the edge of a stiff envelope, and heard its faint rustle.

The door opened at the moment, and, for a breathing space, the eyes of the man who entered sought and met hers.

"Hullo, Middleton! you're late," Gilman exclaimed. "We shall have to start at once if we're going to hear the overture. Bab and I had given you up, and were just settling down to a Darby and Joan evening, weren't we, Bab?"

At the Article of Death

By John Buchan

A NOISELESS evening fell chill and dank on the moorlands. The Dreichil was mist to the very rim of its precipitous face, and the long, dun sides of the Little Muneraw faded into grey vapour. Underfoot were plashy moss and dripping heather, and all the air was choked with autumnal heaviness. The herd of the Lanely Bield stumbled wearily homeward in this, the late afternoon, with the roof-tree of his cottage to guide him over the waste.

For weeks, months, he had been ill, fighting the battle of a lonely sickness. Two years ago his wife had died, and as there had been no child, he was left to fend for himself. He had no need for any woman, he declared, for his wants were few and his means of the scantiest, so he had cooked his own meals and done his own household work since the day he had stood by the grave in the Gladsmuir kirkyard. And for a little he did well; and then, inch by inch, trouble crept upon him. He would come home late in the winter nights, soaked to the skin, and sit in the peat-reek till his clothes dried on his body. The countless little ways in which a woman's hand makes a place healthy and habitable were unknown to him, and soon he began to pay the price of his folly. For he was not a strong man, though a careless onlooker might

might have guessed the opposite from his mighty frame. His folk had all been short-lived, and already his was the age of his father at his death. Such a fact might have warned him to circumspection; but he took little heed till that night in the March before, when, coming up the Little Muneraw and breathing hard, a chill wind on the summit cut him to the bone. He rose the next morn, shaking like a leaf, and then for weeks he lay ill in bed, while a younger shepherd from the next sheep-farm did his work on the hill. In the early summer he rose a broken man, without strength or nerve, and always oppressed with an ominous sinking in the chest; but he toiled through his duties, and told no man his sorrow. The summer was parchingly hot, and the hill-sides grew brown and dry as ashes. Often as he laboured up the interminable ridges, he found himself sickening at heart with a poignant regret. These were the places where once he had strode so freely with the crisp air cool on his forehead. Now he had no eye for the pastoral loveliness, no ear for the witch-song of the desert. When he reached a summit, it was only to fall panting, and when he came home at nightfall he sank wearily on a seat.

And so through the lingering summer the year waned to an autumn of storm. Now his malady seemed nearing its end. He had seen no man's face for a week, for long miles of moor severed him from a homestead. He could scarce struggle from his bed by mid-day, and his daily round of the hill was gone through with tottering feet. The time would soon come for drawing the ewes and driving them to the Gladsmuir market. If he could but hold on till the word came, he might yet have speech of a fellow man, and bequeath his duties to another. But if he died first, the charge would wander uncared for, while he himself would lie in that lonely cot till such time as the lowland farmer sent the messenger.

messenger. With anxious care he tended his flickering spark of life—he had long ceased to hope—and with something like heroism, looked blankly towards his end.

But on this afternoon all things had changed. At the edge of the water-meadow he had found blood dripping from his lips, and half-swooned under an agonising pain at his heart. With burning eyes he turned his face to home, and fought his way inch by inch through the desert. He counted the steps crazily, and with pitiful sobs looked upon mist and moorland. A faint bleat of a sheep came to his ear ; he heard it clearly, and the hearing wrung his soul. Not for him any more the hills of sheep and a shepherd's free and wholesome life. He was creeping, stricken, to his homestead to die, like a wounded fox crawling to its earth. And the loneliness of it all, the pity, choked him more than the fell grip of his sickness.

Inside the house a great banked fire of peats was smouldering. Unwashed dishes stood on the table, and the bed in the corner was unmade, for such things were of little moment in the extremity of his days. As he dragged his leaden foot over the threshold, the autumn dusk thickened through the white fog, and shadows awaited him, lurking in every corner. He dropped carelessly on the bed's edge, and lay back in deadly weakness. No sound broke the stillness, for the clock had long ago stopped for lack of winding. Only the shaggy collie which had lain down by the fire looked to the bed and whined mournfully.

In a little he raised his eyes and saw that the place was filled with darkness, save where the red eye of the fire glowed hot and silent. His strength was too far gone to light the lamp, but he could make a crackling fire. Some power other than himself made him heap bog-sticks on the peat and poke it feebly, for he shuddered at the ominous long shades which peopled floor and

ceiling. If he had but a leaping blaze he might yet die in a less gross mockery of comfort.

Long he lay in the firelight, sunk in the lethargy of illimitable feebleness. Then the strong spirit of the man began to flicker within him and rise to sight ere it sank in death. He had always been a godly liver, one who had no youth of folly to look back upon, but a well-spent life of toil lit by the lamp of a half-understood devotion. He it was who at his wife's death-bed had administered words of comfort and hope; and he had passed all his days with the thought of his own end fixed like a bull's-eye in the target of his meditations. In his lonely hill-watches, in the weary lambing days, and on droving journeys to far-away towns, he had whiled the hours with self-communing, and self-examination, by the help of a rigid Word. Nay, there had been far more than the mere punctilios of obedience to the letter; there had been the living fire of love, the heroical attitude of self-denial, to be the halo of his solitary life. And now God had sent him the last fiery trial, and he was left alone to put off the garments of mortality.

He dragged himself to a cupboard where all the appurtenances of the religious life lay to his hand. There were Spurgeon's sermons in torn covers, and a dozen musty *Christian Treasuries*. Some antiquated theology which he had got from his father, lay lowest, and on the top was the gaudy Bible, which he had once received from a grateful Sabbath class while he yet sojourned in the lowlands. It was lined and re-lined, and there he had often found consolation. Now in the last faltering of mind he had braced himself to the thought that he must die as became his possession, with the Word of God in his hand, and his thoughts fixed on that better country, which is heavenly.

The thin leaves mocked his hands, and he could not turn to
any

any well-remembered text. In vain he struggled to reach the gospels ; the obstinate leaves blew ever back to a dismal psalm or a prophet's lamentation. A word caught his eye and he read vaguely : "The shepherds slumber, O King, . . . the people is scattered upon the mountains . . . and no man gathereth them . . . there is no healing of the hurt, for the wound is grievous." Something in the poignant sorrow of the phrase caught his attention for one second, and then he was back in a fantasy of pain and impotence. He could not fix his mind, and even as he strove he remembered the warning he had so often given to others against death-bed repentance. Then, he had often said, a man has no time to make his peace with his Maker, when he is wrestling with death. Now the adage came back to him ; and gleams of comfort shot for one moment through his soul. He at any rate had long since chosen for God, and the good Lord would see and pity His servant's weakness.

A sheep bleated near the window, and then another. The flocks were huddling down, and wind and wet must be coming. Then a long dreary wind sighed round the dwelling, and at the same moment a bright tongue of flame shot up from the fire, and a queer crooked shadow flickered over the ceiling. The sight caught his eyes, and he shuddered in nameless terror. He had never been a coward, but like all religious folk he had imagination and emotion. Now his fancy was perturbed, and he shrank from these uncanny shapes. In the failure of all else he had fallen to the repetition of bare phrases, telling of the fragrance and glory of the city of God. "River of the water of Life," he said to himself, . . . "the glory and honour of the nations . . . and the street of the city was pure gold . . . and the saved shall walk in the light of it . . . and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes."

Again a sound without, the cry of sheep and the sough of a lone wind.

wind. He was sinking fast, but the noise gave him a spasm of strength. The dog rose and sniffed uneasily at the door, a trickle of rain dripped from the roofing, and all the while the silent heart of the fire glowed and hissed at his side. It seemed an uncanny thing that now in the moment of his anguish the sheep should bleat as they had done in the old strong days of herding.

Again the sound, and again the morris-dance of shadows among the rafters. The thing was too much for his failing mind. Some words of hope—"streams in the desert, and"—died on his lips, and he crawled from the bed to a cupboard. He had not tasted strong drink for a score of years, for to the true saint in the uplands abstinence is a primary virtue; but he kept brandy in the house for illness or wintry weather. Now it would give him strength, and it was no sin to cherish the spark of life.

He found the spirits and gulped down a mouthful—one, two, till the little flask was drained, and the raw fluid spilled over beard and coat. In his days of health it would have made him drunk, but now all the fibres of his being were relaxed, and it merely strung him to a fantasmal vigour, but more, it maddened his brain, already tottering under the assaults of death. Before, he had thought feebly and greyly; now his mind surged in an ecstasy.

The pain that lay heavy on his chest, that clutched his throat, that tugged at his heart, was as fierce as ever, but for one short second the utter weariness of spirit was gone. The old fair words of Scripture came back to him, and he murmured promises and hopes till his strength failed him for all but thought, and with closed eyes he fell back to dream.

But only for one moment; the next he was staring blankly in a mysterious terror. Again the voices of the wind, again the shapes

shapes on floor and wall and the relentless eye of the fire. He was too helpless to move and too crazy to pray ; he could only lie and stare, numb with expectancy. The liquor seemed to have driven all memory from him, and left him with a child's heritage of dreams and stories.

Crazily he pattered to himself a child's charm against evil fairies, which the little folk of the moors still speak at their play.

Wearie, Ovie, gang awa',
Dinna show your face at a',
Ower the muir and down the burn,
Wearie, Ovie, ne'er return.

The black crook of the chimney was the object of his spells, for the kindly ingle was no less than a malignant twisted devil, with an awful red eye glowering through smoke.

His breath was winnowing through his worn chest like an autumn blast in bare rafters. The horror of the black night without, all filled with the wail of sheep, and the deeper fear of the red light within, stirred his brain, not with the far-reaching fanciful terror of men, but with the crude homely fright of a little child. He would have sought, had his strength suffered him, to cower one moment in the light as a refuge from the other, and the next to hide in the darkest corner to shun the maddening glow. And with it all he was acutely conscious of the last pangs of mortality. He felt the grating of cheek-bones on skin, and the sighing, which did duty for breath, rocked him with agony.

Then a great shadow rose out of the gloom and stood shaggy in the firelight. The man's mind was tottering, and once more he was back at his Scripture memories and vague repetitions. Aforetime his fancy had toyed with green fields, now it held to the darker places. "It was the day when Evil Merodach was king in Babylon,"

Babylon," came the quaint recollection, and some lingering ray of thought made him link the odd name with the amorphous presence before him. The thing moved and came nearer, touched him, and brooded by his side. He made to shriek, but no sound came, only a dry rasp in the throat and a convulsive twitch of the limbs.

For a second he lay in the agony of a terror worse than the extremes of death. It was only his dog, returned from his watch by the door, and seeking his master. He, poor beast, knew of some sorrow vaguely and afar, and nuzzled into his side with dumb affection.

Then from the chaos of faculties a shred of will survived. For an instant his brain cleared, for to most there comes a lull at the very article of death. He saw the bare moorland room, he felt the dissolution of his members, the palpable ebb of life. His religion had been swept from him like a rotten garment. His mind was vacant of memories, for all were driven forth by purging terror. Only some relic of manliness, the heritage of cleanly and honest days, was with him to the uttermost. With blank thoughts, without hope or vision, with nought save an aimless resolution and a causeless bravery, he passed into the short anguish which is death.

Children of the Mist

By Rosamund Marriott-Watson

THE cold airs from the river creep
About the murky town,
The spectral willows, half-asleep,
Trail their long tresses down
Where the dim tide goes wandering slow,
Sad with perpetual ebb and flow.

The great blind river, cold and wide,
Goes groping by the shore,
And still where water and land divide
He murmurs evermore
The overword of an old song,
The echo of an ancient wrong.

There is no sound 'twixt stream and sky,
But white mists walk the strand,
Waifs of the night that wander by,
Wraiths from the river-land—
While here, beneath the dripping trees,
Stray other souls more lost than these.

Voiceless

Voiceless and visionless they fare,
Known all too well to me—
Ghosts of the years that never were,
The years that could not be—
And still, beneath the eternal skies
The old blind river gropes and sighs.

Three Pictures

By Aline Szold

I. Maternity

II. Grief

III. A Study of Trees



A Forgotten Novelist

By Hermione Ramsden

THERE is no sufficient reason to account for the manner in which Robert Bage has been forgotten, while numbers of his contemporaries have been canonised among the classics. It may be true that his works have not the enduring qualities of Samuel Richardson's many-volumed novels, yet they are not without many of the attributes which go towards the making of popular romances, and in many respects they are better calculated to appeal to the reading public of our time. His style is brighter than Richardson's, less sentimental than Fielding's; his good men are less priggish, and his young women have more of nature in them; while, as regards his subjects, he may be said to have much in common with some modern authors, who would find it no easy matter to surpass him in the boldness with which he upholds his opinions.

Bage was born on the 29th of January, 1728, at Darley, where his father was a paper manufacturer, which profession he afterwards followed. In politics he was a Whig, while in religion it is said that, for a time at least, he was a Quaker, which would account for his peculiar way of writing; but if this was the case, he does not appear to have remained one long, for, to use the expression of a contemporary, he very soon "reasoned himself into infidelity,"

infidelity," and all the traces that remained of his former religious persuasion were a sincere esteem for the Quakers and an unconquerable dislike for the clergy. The characters of Miss Carlill in *Man as He Is*, and of Arnold in *Barham Downs*, are delineated with a touch of sympathy which is quite unmistakable, while Mr. Holford and the Rev. Dr. Blick, who differ so little as to be virtually the same man, are both of them the *beau-idéal* of the sporting parson of the period, and are described as the toadies of a rich lord, for ever holding up the example of the patriarchs as an excuse for the behaviour of their wealthy patrons. Mr. Holford "was a sound divine, orthodox in preaching and eating, could bear a little infidelity and free-thinking, provided they were accompanied with good wine and good venison."

But to return to Bage's own life. Shortly after the death of his mother, his father removed to Derby, and Robert was sent to school, where it seems that he soon proved himself a distinguished scholar, for at the age of seven he was already proficient in Latin.

In 1765 he entered into partnership in an iron manufactory with three persons, one of whom was the then celebrated Dr. Darwin; but the business failed, and Bage lost a considerable portion of his fortune. It was partly as a distraction from these pecuniary troubles that he wrote his novels. Of these, *Mount Henneth* was the first, and it was written, as he informs his readers in the preface, in order that he might be able to present each of his daughters with a new silk gown. The fashions appear to have been as tyrannical in those days as they are now, for our author declares that it was with feelings approaching to dismay that he observed that his daughters' head-dresses were suffering "an amazing expansion."

This novel was written in the form of letters, and was published in 1781, when the copyright was sold for the sum of £30.

It

It is filled with the most surprising and improbable situations, while many of the characters appear to have been introduced for the sole purpose of relating other peoples' histories, the result being awkward and unnatural. *Mount Henneth* was speedily followed by works of a similar nature; *Barham Downs*, two vols., published in 1784, which, by some, was considered his best; *The Fair Syrian*, two vols., 1787; *James Wallace*, three vols., 1788; and, finally, his two masterpieces: *Man as He Is*,* and *Hermsprong, or Man as He Is Not*.†

The epistolary style in which Richardson had succeeded so well was not suited to the lighter substance of Bage's novels, and it was not until he dropped it and developed a style of his own that he can be said to have achieved anything worthy of immortality. It was his careful studies of character, no less than the fidelity with which he pictured the manners and customs of the times, to which he owed the wide-spread reputation that he enjoyed in his life-time, when translations of his novels were published abroad in France and Germany. In his own country, fresh editions were continually called for, and after his death in 1801, they were republished under the editorship of Mrs. Barbauld and Sir Walter Scott. The poet Cowper may also be counted as one of his admirers, for, in a letter to William Hayley, dated May 21, 1793, he writes as follows:

. . . "There has been a book lately published, entitled *Man as He Is*. I have heard a high character of it, as admirably written, and

* *Man as He Is*. A novel in four volumes. London: printed for William Lane, at the Minerva Press, Leadenhall Street. 1792.

† *Hermsprong; or, Man as He Is Not*. A novel in two volumes. By the author of *Man as He Is*. Dublin: printed by Brett Smith, for P. Wogan, P. Byrne, J. Moore, and J. Rice. 1796.

and am informed that for that reason, and because it inculcates Whig principles, it is, by many, imputed to you."

And the same year, in a letter to Samuel Rose, dated Dec. 8, he writes :

"We find it excellent ; abounding with wit and just sentiment, and knowledge both of books and men."

According to his friend, William Hutton, Bage cared little for the world, although he seems to have resembled Richardson in the preference which he evinced for the society of ladies, and he undoubtedly surpassed the latter in his manner of describing some of them. Maria Fluart, for instance, in *Hermesprung*, is a woman of the same type as Charlotte Grandison, yet it cannot be denied that her character is better drawn and her frivolous moods more consistently sustained ; for Charlotte, in spite of her flightiness, partakes too strongly of the Grandison temperament, and there are moments when she relapses into conversations worthy of her brother.

Of Bage's domestic life we know very little, beyond the fact that he had three step-mothers, and that he married, at the age of twenty-three, a lady possessed of beauty, good sense, good temper, and money. In a letter, written a few months before his death, we learn that his wife sometimes scolded him to the extent of spoiling his appetite at breakfast, but that he bore it patiently we may conclude from the following passage, quoted from *Man as He Is*, which seems likely to have been the result of personal experience :

Every man whose education has not been very ill-conducted, has learned to bear the little agreeable asperities of the gentle sex, not merely as a necessary evil, but as a variety, vastly conducive to female embellishment, and consequently to man's felicity.

In Bage, as in almost all authors, the autobiographical note is
not

not absent, and when we come upon sentences as astounding as the following, we cannot avoid the suggestion that one or other of those three step-mothers must have inspired it :

"Ladies," said Sir George, "have no weapons but their tongues and their nails. . . ."

But Lady Mary Paradyne by no means confined herself to these, for when suffering from one of her periodical attacks of gout, a "slipper or a snuff-box thrown at the head of her nurse or her woman gave her tolerable ease." And on one occasion "she enforced her observations with a knife," and inflicted a wound on the nurse's arm which resulted in "an eloquence superior to her own."

Domestic happiness is decidedly not a characteristic of Bage's novels, and here, as elsewhere, it is the women who receive all the blame.

"What shall I say of our women?" exclaims Mr. Mowbray. "Heavens! What pen or tongue can enumerate the evils which arise from our connections, our matrimonial connections, with this frail and feeble sex? Which of our corruptions may we not trace to their vanities? . . . In every connection with woman, man seeks happiness and risks it—and the risque is great. It is so much the greater, because in the usual mode of connection, the laws come in to perpetuate it, and the misery is for life. Gentlemen endeavour to avoid this . . . and no doubt that 'as long as we love,' is a more advantageous formula than 'as long as we live.' Yet there are drawbacks."

Mr. Fielding, a friend of Sir George's, goes further still in maintaining that "matrimony kills love, as sure as foxes eat geese."

Sir George Paradyne was a model son, and always respectful in his behaviour towards his mother, although her complaints,
poured

poured forth over five glasses of Madeira in succession, must often have been a severe trial to his patience. It was Lady Mary's desire that he should be the most accomplished gentleman of his age, and in order that this wish might be realised, she was anxious to procure him a tutor who had studied manners under Lord Chesterfield, in place of the worthy Mr. Lindsay, whose views on education were the direct antithesis to her own. Of Lady Mary it is said that "her affections went to the whole duties of a mother. . . . It was she who regulated his taste in dress, who superintended the friseur in the important decoration of his head."

Poor Sir George ! What a vision of powdered hair and pig-tail, flowered satin waistcoat and velvet coat, to say nothing of the shoes with diamond buckles ! He was only just twenty when the story begins, and as yet quite unspoilt by the world ; his chief delight at this period was to converse with Lindsay on Cicero and Demosthenes, Horace and Virgil, or to spend a quiet evening "in moralizing upon the various follies of mankind." It was not without reason that he had asked Lindsay to become his friend and guide, for he sadly needed some one to whom he could confide his love for Miss Cornelia Colerain. Mr. Lindsay was a man of parts ; he had met with a variety of misfortunes, and was a philosopher, if, also, somewhat of a pessimist. His chief aim at this time seems to have been to warn his pupil against the dangers of matrimony, because, as he says :

"The love of woman and the love of fame lead to different things ; no one knows better than myself how fatal love, as a passion, is to manly exertion."

Even the worthy Lindsay does not seem to have held the ordinary views on the subject of marriage, for on one occasion he shocks the fair Quakeress by observing that :

"If

"If it was the law or usage of the country for men and women to make temporary contracts, no one would call it a vice."

"According to thee, then," said Miss Carlill, "vice and virtue are mode and fashion?"

"Not wholly so, perhaps," Mr. Lindsay said, "nor wholly otherwise. . . . It is a pity a tender mistake, as it often does, should involve two people in wretchedness for life."

Yet he is not afraid to risk his happiness with Miss Carlill, and she condescends to marry him at last, in spite of their differences of opinion.

"I like not the doings of thy steeple-house," she tells him; "there is much noise and little devotion. . . . If I take thee, it is out of pity to thy poor soul."

And with this reason he is obliged to be content.

Sir George, on the other hand, is no pessimist with regard to marriage; he feels assured that a good wife is the greatest blessing that Heaven can bestow; but when Miss Colerain will not accept him because she considers that their acquaintance has been too short, the effect upon his character is not all that could be desired. These circumstances result in a strained relationship with Lindsay, they part in anger, and Sir George is left to continue his "airy course." "Youth," he argued, "must have its follies; the season would be over soon; a few years œconomy would free him from their effects," . . . and for the time being he forgot Miss Colerain.

The author here excuses himself for his hero's conduct by saying that the rules of probability would be violated were he to depict the character of a young gentleman of quality in the reign of George III. with too many virtues.

Sir George goes to Paris, gets into debt, and is obliged to have recourse to Lindsay to help him out of his difficulties. Three

years he intends to devote to the business of regeneration ; the remainder of his life to his country, to friendship, and, if he can obtain her, to Miss Colerain. But the lady in question requires to be fully convinced of the sincerity of his repentance before she will marry him, and because of this delay "his spirits flagged ; his appetite ceased ; his bloom changed ; and it was too apparent that he must soon be lost to his friends and to himself." His days were spent in the contemplation of Miss Colerain's picture which he had hung in a temple in the garden, and so great was the depression of his spirits that he would most certainly have died but for the timely intervention of a certain Mr. Bardo, who thus addressed him :

"Paradyne," said he, "you are a fool."

Thus roused, Sir George regained his courage, and before long the fair Cornelia consented to become his wife.

If we may trust the combined testimony of eighteenth century authors, *Man as He Is* may be studied as a faithful representation of a time when emotional natures were more common than they are now, when young men wept because their mothers scolded them, and turned dizzy at an unexpected meeting with the lady of their choice. Sir George, on one occasion, after he had been severely reprimanded by his mother for fighting one of the many duels in which he was constantly engaged, "withdrew to his library with his handkerchief at his eyes." With women, fainting was more than a fashion, it was an art, and Cornelia, like other fair ladies of her time, could faint at a moment's notice.

Another very interesting point in Bage's novels is the important part played by the lady's maid and the valet. That this was actually the case, and was not merely an invention of the author's, is proved by the frequency with which like incidents occur in the works of contemporary novelists ; readers of Richardson will remember

remember how a dishonest footman assisted the villainous Sir Hargrave Pollexfen in the abduction of Miss Harriet Byron, and how that that young lady herself sees no harm in cross-questioning her friend's maid on the subject of her mistress's love affairs. Miss Grandison's maid was the daughter of a clergyman, and it does not appear to have been at all unusual for young ladies in distressed circumstances to earn their living in this way, for even the learned Mrs. Bennet, in Fielding's *Amelia*, had some thoughts of going into service and was advised by her aunt to do so, in spite of her knowledge of Latin.

In *Man as He Is*, the ladies' "women" and gentlemen's "gentlemen" are persons of influence, and Sir George Paradyne, the first time that he is refused by Miss Colerain, drives off, leaving his purse in the hand of Susanna, her "woman," with the request that she shall pray for him three times a day to her mistress. And another time, whilst he is discussing the subject of his sister's matrimonial happiness with Mr. Lindsay, his "gentleman," who happens to be in waiting at the breakfast table, suddenly assumes the air of having something of importance to say, and, upon being pressed, he reads a love-letter which he has just received from the above-mentioned lady's "woman," which serves to confirm Sir George's worst fears.

Bage's last and best work, *Hermesprong, or Man as He Is Not*, marks a new stage in contemporary thought, and this time the change is brought about by a woman. Nora realises that she is being treated like a doll! In other words, the "woman question," which had slumbered since the days of Mary Astell, had just made its re-appearance in the person and writings of Mary Wollstonecraft, whose *Vindication of the Rights of Woman* first saw the light in 1792. That Bage was strongly influenced by it is proved

proved by the fact that his hero—who, it must be remembered, represents man as he is *not*—is very eloquent in his arguments in favour of the higher education of women. Women, he maintains, are allowed too little liberty of mind, and he adds :

“Be not angry with me . . . be angry at Mrs. Wollstonecraft . . . who has presumed to say that the homage men pay to youth and beauty is insidious, that women for the sake of this evanescent, this pitiful dominion permit themselves to be persuaded that their highest glory is to submit to this inferiority of character, *and become the mere plaything of man*. Can this be so ?”

“Now, the devil take me,” said Sumelin, “if I know what either you or this Mrs. Wollstonecraft would be at. But this I know, that the influence of women is too great ; that it has increased, is increasing, and ought to be diminished.”

“Well then,” Mr. Hermsprong answered, “let it be diminished on the side of charms ; and let its future increase be on the side of mind.”

“To what purpose ?” the banker asked. “To invade the provinces of men ? Weaker bodies, you will allow, nature has given them, if not weaker minds.”

“Whatsoever may be the design of nature, respecting the sex, be her designs fulfilled. If she gave this bodily weakness, should education be brought in to increase it ? But it is for mind I most contend ; and if ‘a firm mind in a firm body’ be supposed the best prayer of man to the gods, why not of women ? Would they be worse mothers for it ? or more helpless widows ?”

“No,” said the banker ; “but they would be less charming figures.”

“Let us be more just, Mr. Sumelin. They are our equals in understanding, our superiors in virtue. They have foibles where men have faults, and faults where men have crimes.”

Hermsprong

Hermsprong is the necessary complement to Sir George Paradyne. He is the ideal, while the other is the real. Hermsprong is a native of America, and in many respects he resembles the Alien of Mr. Grant Allen's hill-top novel. In Bage's time, America was still sufficiently unknown to supply the novelist from Mrs. Aphra Behn* onwards with an original character for which now-a-days he is obliged to seek among the phantoms of the twenty-fifth century, or in the person of an angel visitant. Hermsprong, like the Alien, or Mr. H. G. Wells's angel, is a thoroughly unconventional being who finds it impossible to accustom himself to the ways and habits of British barbarians. He is, according to his own description, a savage whose wish it is to return to nature, and who holds up the habits and customs of the American Red Indians as worthy of being imitated. He is in fact an Anarchist, who maintains that virtue is natural to man, and that a return to nature is a return to the primeval state of innocence before the laws had taught men how to sin.

Hermsprong's views, however, do not assume any very dangerous proportions. The utmost that he does to astonish the natives is to announce his intention of going to London on foot, a journey which is likely to occupy three days. But if he had suggested flying, the announcement could hardly have excited more surprise.

"Surely, Mr. Hermsprong, you cannot think of walking?"

"Oh, man of prejudice, why? In what other way can I travel with equal pleasure?"

"Pleasure! Pleasure in England is not attached to the idea of walking. Your walks we perform in chaises."

"I pity

* *Oroonoko; or, the Royal Slave.* By the Ingenious Mrs. Behn. Seventh Edition. London, 1722.

"I pity you for it. For myself, I chuse not to buy infirmity so dear. . . . I must be independent, so far as social man can be independent. In other words I must be free from the necessity of doing little things, or saying little words to any man. . . ."

It is said of him that his singularities of character unfit him for the society of English gentlemen ; he eats only to live, instead of living to eat ; he cares nothing for the pleasures of the bottle, nor for the still greater pleasures of cards and dice, yet his manners are such that he never fails to please. An English dinner he considers melancholy :

"If to dine," says he, "were only to eat, twenty minutes would be ample. You sit usually a couple of hours, and you talk, and call it conversation. You make learned remarks on wind and weather ; on roads ; on dearness of provisions ; and your essays on cookery are amazingly edifying. Not much less so are your histories of your catarrhs and toothaches. . . . It is said that physicians have much increased in your country ; one great reason may be, because you dine."

He has, moreover, a secret, but deep-founded contempt for the forms of politeness, and is often found to err on the side of plain speaking, to the intense anxiety of those who are anxious to befriend him.

"I have often been told," he says, "that in very, very civilised countries no man could hold up the mirror of truth to a lady's face, without ill-manners. I came to try."

In this experiment he is fairly successful, for the ladies do not resent his truthfulness as much as might have been expected. His mission, like the Alien's, is to rescue a lady from tyranny, only this time the tyrant is a father and not a husband. By degrees he overcomes her filial prejudices by bidding her lay aside
all

all pre-conceived notions of duty, and declaring that "in vain would the reasoners of this polished country say everything is due to the authors of our existence. Merely for existence, I should have answered, I owe nothing. It is for rendering that existence a blessing, my filial gratitude is due."

The lady of his choice is a certain Miss Campinet, the daughter of Lord Grondale, but the latter does not favour his suit, which is the less surprising when we consider that it is one of the characteristics of the savage that he does not love lords. It will be remembered that the Alien did not love lords either, and that he, too, was equally contemptuous of rank and riches. The conversation which takes place between Hermsprong and his father-in-law elect is sufficiently original to be worth transcribing :

"Before I condescend to give you my daughter," says Lord Grondale, "I must have a more particular account of your family, Sir ; of its alliances, Sir ; and of your rent roll."

"Upon my word, my Lord ; here is a great deal of difficulty in this country to bring two people together, who are unfortunate enough to have property. For my part I have thought little of what your lordship thinks so much. I have thought only that I was a man, and she a woman—lovely, indeed, but still a woman. Nature has created a general affinity between these two species of beings ; incident has made it particular between Miss Campinet and me. In such situations, people usually marry ; so I consent to marry."

We must observe that it was a gross inconsistency on the part of Hermsprong that he should be guilty of one of the most barbarous customs of the times. When applying to Lord Grondale for permission to marry his daughter, he never contemplates the necessity of first consulting the wishes of the young lady herself ;

herself; these he takes for granted, and when reproached for his lack of humility, he defends himself by saying :

"I consider a woman as equal to a man; but . . . I consider a man also as equal to a woman. When we marry we give and we receive. Where is the necessity that man should take upon him this crouching mendicant spirit, this excess of humiliation?"

All this is very plausible, of course, but his notions of love-making were curious, to say the least, and it is difficult not to feel some compassion for Miss Campinet. In course of time however, his arguments convince her, and his efforts on her behalf are crowned with the success they deserve. He turns out to be none other than her long-lost cousin, Sir Charles Campinet, the lawful heir to Lord Grondale's estate, and the son of his ship-wrecked brother. A reconciliation takes place, Lord Grondale dies, and the young couple are happy ever after.

As an author, Robert Bage resembles Mr. Grant Allen in more than one respect, for in the first place his publisher was one named Lane, and in the second his object was to instruct women. Instruction intended for them can only be offered in the form of a novel as they are not likely to read works of a more serious nature, and *Man as He Is* is intended especially for the fair sex, amongst whom he hopes to find twenty thousand readers; in it he treats of the subjects which he thinks will be most agreeable to them, *i.e.*, love and fashion. In like manner, Mr. Grant Allen, in his *British Barbarians*, informs us that he writes not for wise men, because they are wise already, but that it is the boys and girls and women—women in particular—whom he desires to instruct.

The study of *Man as He Is* and *Is Not*, or rather, as he was and was not, in the years 1792 and 1796, is very instructive and
also

also distinctly salutary, and as such it deserves to be recommended as an antidote to pessimism. Both these books prove in the most convincing manner that a great change for the better has taken place in the ways and customs of English men and women since the close of the eighteenth century. Men no longer fight duels at the smallest provocation, nor weep in public, and women have long ceased to cultivate the art of fainting, nor do they—in polite society—use their nails as weapons of defence, while even the art of writing fiction has made considerable progress since the days when Robert Bage first began to write his romances.

A Fire

By Stephen Phillips

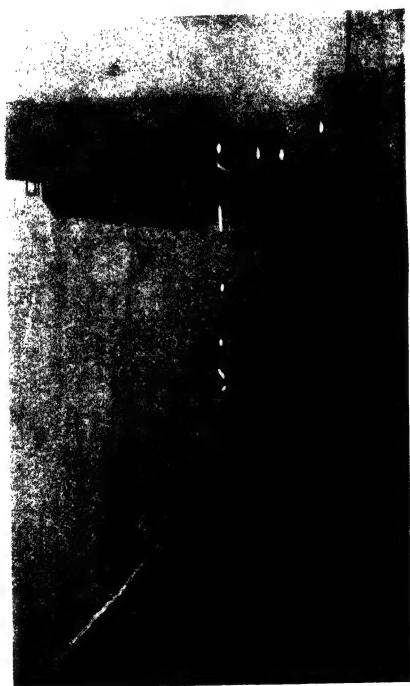
DAZZLED with watching how the swift fire fled
Along the dribbling roof, I turned my head ;
When lo, upraised beneath the lighted cloud
The illumed unconscious faces of the crowd !
Beautiful souls I knew and spirits dire,
A moment naked, and betrayed by fire ;
An old grey face in lovely bloom upturned,
The ancient rapture and the dream returned ;
A cautious face, now brilliant and rash,
The scheming eyes hither and thither flash ;
The experienced face, with all emotion crushed,
Now, as at some great wrong indignant, flushed ;
The hungering tramp with indolent gloating stare,
The beggar in glory and devoid of care :
That grey and trivial face, made up of needs,
Now pale and recent from triumphant deeds !
A mother slowly burning with bare breast,
Yet her consuming babe close to her prest ;
That prosperous citizen in anguish dire,
Beseeching heaven from purgatorial fire,
Souls unaware by sudden flame betrayed
I saw ; then through the darkness stole, afraid.

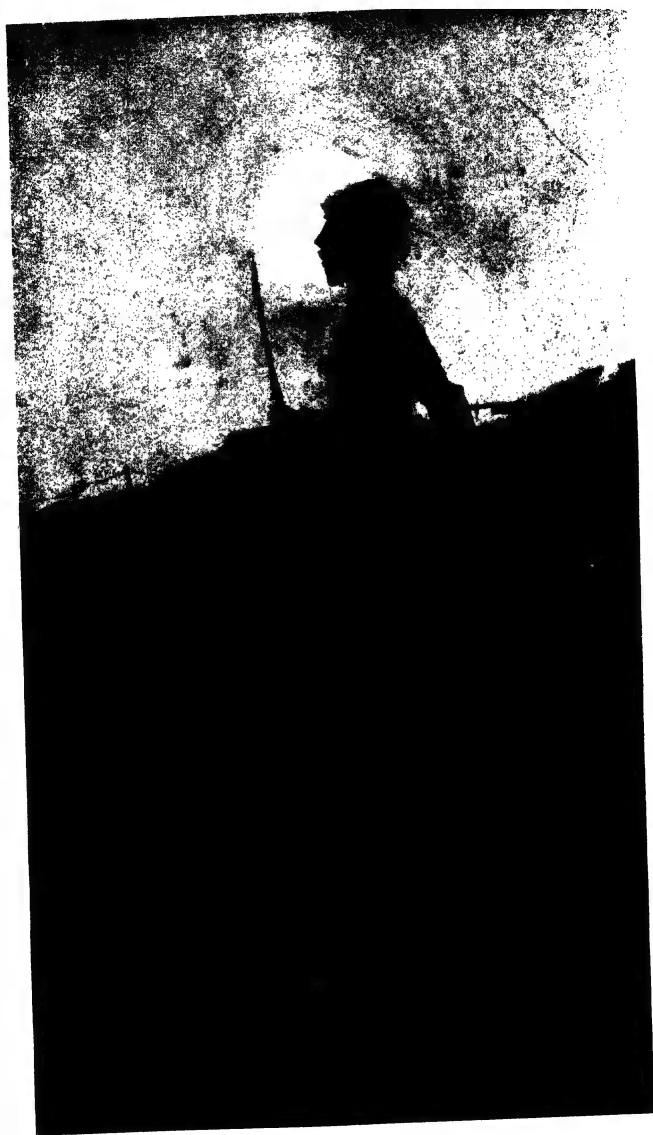
Two Pictures

By Charles Pears

I. Ferry Bridge

II. The Harvest-Moon





At Twickenham

By Ella D'Arcy

WHEN John Corbett married Minnie Wray, her sister Lætitia, their parents being dead, came to live under his roof also, which seemed to Corbett the most natural arrangement in the world, for he was an Irishman, and the Irish never count the cost of an extra mouth. "Where there's enough for two, there's enough for three," is a favourite saying of theirs, and even in the most impecunious Irish household no one ever dreams of grudging you your bite of bread or sup o' th' crathur.

But Corbett was not impecunious. On the contrary, he was fairly well off, being partner in and traveller for an Irish whiskey house, and earning thus between eight and nine hundred a year. In the Income Tax returns he put the figure down as five hundred, but in conversation he referred to it casually as over a thousand; for he had some of the vices of his nationality as well as most of its virtues, and to impress Twickenham with a due sense of the worth of John Corbett was perhaps his chief preoccupation out of business hours.

He lived in an imitation high art villa on the road to Strawberry Hill; a villa that rejoiced in the name of "Braemar," gilded in gothic letters upon the wooden gate; a villa that flared up into pinnacles, blushed with red-brick, and mourned behind sad-tinted
glass.

glass. The Elizabethan casements let in piercing draughts, the Brummagen brass door-handles came off in the confiding hand that sought to turn them, the tiled hearths successfully conducted all the heat up the chimneys to disperse it generously over an inclement sky. But Corbett found consolation in the knowledge that the hall was paved with grey and white mosaic, that "Salve" bristled at you from the door-mat, that the dining-room boasted of a dado, and that the drawing-room rose to the dignity of a frieze.

Minnie Corbett, whose full name was Margaret but who preferred to be called Rita, although she could not teach her family to remember to call her so, and Lætitia, who had recently changed the "Tish" of her childhood to the more poetical Letty, dressed the windows of "Braemar," with frilled Madras muslin, draped the mantel-pieces with plush, hung the walls with coloured photographs, Chinese crockery, and Japanese fans. They made expeditions into town in search of pampas grass and bulrushes, with which in summer-time they decorated the fireplace, and in winter the painted drain-pipes which stood in the corners of the room.

Beyond which labours of love, and Minnie's perfunctory ordering of the dinner every morning, neither she nor Lætitia found anything to do, for Corbett kept a cook, a house-parlourmaid, and a nurse to look after Minnie's three children, in whom her interest seemed to have ceased when she had bestowed on them the fine-sounding names of Lancelot, Hugo, and Guinevere. Lætitia had never pretended to feel any interest in the children at all.

The sisters suffered terribly from dullness, and one memorable Sunday evening, Corbett being away travelling, they took first-class tickets to Waterloo, returning by the next train, merely to pass the time.

When Corbett was not travelling, his going to and fro between
Twickenham

Twickenham and the city lent a spice of variety to the day. He left every morning by the 9.15 train, coming home in the evening in time for a seven o'clock dinner. On Saturdays he got back by two, when he either mowed the lawn, in his shirt-sleeves, or played a set of tennis with Lætitia, or went with the girls for a row on the river. Or, if Minnie made a special point of it, he escorted them into town again, where he treated them to a restaurant *table d'hôte* and a theatre afterwards. On Sundays he rose late, renewed his weekly acquaintance with the baby, read through the *Referee* from first line to last, and accompanied by his two little boys, dressed in correct Jack Tar costume, went for a walk along the towing-path, whence they could watch the boating.

Humanly speaking, he would have like to have followed the example of those flannel-shirted publicans and sinners who pushed off every moment in gay twos and threes from Shore's landing-stage, but consideration for the susceptibilities of Providence and of Twickenham held him in check.

It is true he did not go to church, although often disquieted by the thought of the bad effect this omission must produce on the mind of his next-door neighbour ; but he salved his conscience with the plea that he was a busy man, and that Sunday was his only day of home life. Besides, the family was well represented by Minnie and Lætitia, who when the weather was fine, never missed morning service. When it was wet they stayed away on account of their frocks.

Sunday afternoons were spent by them sitting in the drawing-room awaiting the visitors who did not come. The number of persons in Twickenham with whom they were on calling terms was limited, nor can it be maintained that "Braemar" was an amusing house at which to call. For though Corbett was one of the most cordial, one of the most hospitable of young men, his women-folk

folk shone rather by their silences than by their conversational gifts.

Minnie Corbett was particularly silent. She had won her husband by lifting to his a pair of blankly beautiful eyes, and it did not seem to her requisite to give greater exertion to the winning of minor successes.

Loetitia could talk to men, provided they were unrelated to her, but she found nothing to say to members of her own sex. Even with her sister she was mostly silent, unless there was a new fashion in hats, the cut of a sleeve, or the set of a skirt to discuss. There was, however, one other topic which invariably aroused her to a transitory animation. This was the passing by the windows in his well-appointed dog-cart, of a man who, because of his upright bearing, moustache, and close-cut hair, she and Minnie had agreed to call "the Captain."

He was tall, evidently, and had a straight nose. Loetitia also was straight-nosed and tall. She saw in this physical resemblance a reason for fostering a sentimental interest in him.

"Quick, Minnie, here's the Captain!" she would cry, and Minnie would awake from the somnolency of Sunday with a start, and skip over to the window to watch a flying vision of a brown horse, a black and red painted cart, and a drab-coated figure holding the reins, while a very small groom in white cords and top-boots maintained his seat behind by means of tightly folded arms and a portentous frown.

"He's got such a pretty horse," observed Minnie on one occasion, before relapsing back into silence, the folding of hands, and a rocking-chair.

"Yes," Loetitia agreed pensively, "it has such a nice tail."

Although she knew nothing concerning the Captain, although it did not seem probable that she ever would know anything,
although

although it was at least a tenable supposition that he was married already and the father of a family, she saw herself, in fancy, the wife of the wearer of the drab coat, driving by his side along the roads of Twickenham, up the High Street of Richmond. She wore, in fancy, a sealskin as handsome as Minnie's and six inches longer, and she ordered lavishly from Gosling and the other tradesmen, giving the address of Captain Devereux of Deepdene, or Captain Mortimer of the Shrubberies. The names were either purely imaginary, or reminiscent of the novels she constantly carried about with her and fitfully read.

She sat nearly always with an open book upon her knee, but neither Hall Caine nor Miss Marie Corelli even in their most inspired moments could woo her to complete self-forgetfulness. She did not wish to forget herself in a novel. She wished to find in it straw for her own brick-making, bricks for her own castle-building. And if a shadow fell across the window, if a step was heard along the hall, she could break off in the most poignant passage to lift a slim hand to the better arrangement of her curls, to thrust a slim foot in lace stocking and pointed shoe to a position of greater conspicuousness.

On Sunday evenings at "Braemar" there was cold supper at eight, consisting of the early dinner joint, eaten with a salad scientifically mixed by Corbett, the remains of the apple or gooseberry pie, cheese, and an excellent Burgundy obtained by him at trade price. When the cloth was removed he did not return to the drawing-room. He never felt at ease in that over-furnished, over-ornate room, so darkened by shaded lamps and pink petticoated candles that it was impossible to read. The white, untempered flames of three gas-burners in the dining-room suited him better, and here he would sit on one side of the hearth in an arm-chair grown comfortable from continual

use, and read over again the already well-read paper, while Minnie, on the other side of the hearth, stared silently before her, and Lætitia fingered her book at the table.

Sometimes Corbett, untaught by past experience, would make a hopeful appeal to one or the other, for an expression of opinion concerning some topic of the day : some new play, some new book. But Minnie seldom took the trouble to hear him at all, and Lætitia would answer with such superficial politeness, with so wide an irrelevance to the subject, that discouraged, he would draw back again into his shell. At the end of every Sunday evening he was glad to remember that the next day was Monday when he could return to his occupations and his acquaintances in the City. In the City men were ready to talk to him, to listen to what he said, and even to affect some show of interest in his views and pursuits.

The chief breaks in his home life, its principal excitements, were the various ailments the children developed, the multifarious and unexpected means they found of putting their lives in jeopardy and adding items to Dr. Payne's half-yearly accounts. Corbett would come home in the happiest mood, to have his serenity roughly shattered by the news that Lancelot had forced a boot-button down his ear, and was rolling on the floor in agony ; that Hugo had bolted seventeen cherry-stones in succession and obstinately refused an emetic ; that the baby had been seized with convulsions, that the whole family were in for chicken-pox, whooping-cough, or mumps.

On such occasions Minnie, recovering something of her ante-nuptial vivacity, seemed to take a positive pleasure in unfolding the harrowing details, in dwelling on the still more harrowing consequences which would probably ensue.

When, on turning into Wetherly Gardens on his way from
the

the station, Corbett perceived his wife's blonde head above the garden gate, he knew at once that it betokened some domestic catastrophe. It had only been in the very early days of their married life that Minnie had hurried to greet his return for the mere pleasure it gave her.

The past winter had brought rather more than the usual crop of casualties among the children, so that it had seemed to Corbett that the parental cup of bitterness was already filled to overflowing, that Fate might well grant him a respite, when, returning from town one warm May Saturday, his thoughts veering riverwards, and his intention being to invite the girls to scull up and have tea at Tagg's, his ears were martyred by the vociferous howls of Hugo, who had just managed to pull down over himself the kettle of water boiling on the nursery fire.

While the women of the household disputed among themselves as to the remedial values of oil, treacle, or magnesia, Corbett rushed round to Payne's to find him away, and to be referred to Dr. Matheson of Holly Cottage, who was taking Payne's cases. At the moment he never noticed what Matheson was like, he received no conscious impression of the other's personality. But when that evening, comparative peace having again fallen upon the Villa, Lætitia remarked for the twentieth time, "How funny that Dr. Matheson should be the Captain, isn't it?" he found in his memory the picture of a tall fair man, with regular features and a quiet manner, he caught the echoes of a pleasantly modulated voice.

The young women did not go to service next morning, but Lætitia put on her best gown nevertheless. She displayed also a good deal of unexpected solicitude for her little nephew, and when Matheson looked in, at about 10 A.M., she saw fit to accompany him and Corbett upstairs to the night-nursery, where Minnie, in
a white

a white wrapper trimmed with ribbons as blue as her eyes and as meaningless, sat gazing into futurity by her son's bedside.

Hugo had given up the attempt to obtain illuminating answers to the intricate social and ethical problems with which he wiled away the pain-filled time. For when by repeated interrogatives of "Mother?" "Eh, mother?" "Well, mother?" he had induced Minnie at least to listen to him, all he extracted from her was some unsatisfying vagueness, which added its quota to the waters of contempt already welling up in his young soul for the intelligence of women.

He rejoiced at the appearance of his father and the doctor, despite some natural heart-sinkings as to what the latter might not purpose doing to him. He knew doctors to be perfectly irresponsible autocrats, who walked into your bedroom, felt your pulse, turned you over and over just as though you were a puppy or a kitten, and then with an impassive countenance ordered you a poultice or a powder, and walked off. He knew that if they condemned you to lose an arm or a leg they would be just as despotic and impassible, and you would have to submit just as quietly. None of the grown-ups about you would ever dream of interfering in your behalf.

So he fixed Matheson with an alert, an inquiring, a profoundly distrustful eye, and with a hand in his father's awaited developments. Lætitia he ignored altogether. He supposed that the existence of aunts was necessary to the general scheme of things, but personally he hadn't any use for them. His predominate impression of Auntie Tish was that she spent her day heating curling-irons over the gas-bracket in her bedroom, and curling her hair, and although he saw great possibilities in curling-irons heated red-hot and applied to reasonable uses, he was convinced that no
one

one besides herself ever knew whether her hair was curled or straight. But women were such ninnies.

The examination over, the scalds re-dressed and covered up again, Matheson on his way downstairs stopped at the staircase window to admire the green and charming piece of garden, which ending in an inconspicuous wooden paling, enjoyed an illusory proprietorship in the belt of fine old elm trees belonging to the demesne beyond.

Corbett invited him to come and take a turn round it, and the two young men stepped out upon the lawn.

It was a delicious blue and white morning, with that Sunday feeling in the air which is produced by the cessation of all workaday noises, and heightened just now by the last melodious bell-cadences floating out from the church on the distant green. The garden was full of flowers and bees, scent and sunshine. Roses, clematis, and canariensis tapestried the brick unsightlinesses of the back of the house. Serried ranks of blue-green lavender, wild companies of undisciplined sweet pea, sturdy clumps of red-hot poker shooting up in fiery contrast to the wide-spreading luxuriance of the cool white daisy bushes, jostled side by side in the border territories which were separated from the lawn by narrow gravel paths.

While Corbett and his guest walked up and down the centre of the grass, Minnie and Lætitia watched them from behind the curtains of the night nursery window.

"He's got such nice hands," said Lætitia, "so white and well kept. Did you notice, Minnie?" Lætitia always noticed hands, because she gave a great deal of attention to her own.

But Minnie, whose hands were not her strong point, was more impressed by Matheson's boots. "I wish Jack would get brown boots, they look so much smarter with light clothes," she remarked,

remarked, but without any intensity of desire. Before the short phrase was finished, her voice had dropped into apathy, her gaze had wandered away from Matheson's boots, from the garden, from the hour. She seemed not to hear her sister's dubious "Yes, but I wonder he wears a tweed suit on Sundays!"

Lætitia heard herself calling him Algernon or Edgar, and remonstrating with him on the subject. Then she went into her bedroom, recurled a peccant lock on her temple, and joined the men just as the dinner gong sounded.

Matheson was pressed to stay and share the early dinner. "Unless," said Corbett, seeing that he hesitated, "Mrs. Matheson . . . perhaps . . . is waiting for you?"

"There is no Mrs. Matheson, as yet," he answered smiling, "although Payne is always telling me it's my professional duty to get married as soon as possible."

Lætitia coloured and smiled.

* * * * *

From that day Matheson was often at "Braemar." At first he came ostensibly to attend to Hugo, but before that small pickle was on his feet again and in fresh mischief, he was sufficiently friendly with the family to drop in without any excuse at all.

He would come of an evening and ask for Corbett, and the maid would show him into the little study behind the dining-room, where Corbett enjoyed his after-dinner smoke. He enjoyed it doubly in Matheson's society, and discovered he had been thirsting for some such companionship for years. The girls were awfully nice, of course, but . . . and then, the fellows in the City . . . he compared them with Matheson, much to their disadvantage. For Matheson struck him as being amazingly clever—a pillar of originality—and his fine indifference to the most cherished opinions of Twickenham made Corbett catch his
breath,

breath. But the time spent with his friend was only too short. Minnie and Lætitia always found some pretext to join them, and they would reproach Matheson in so cordial a manner for never coming into the drawing-room, that presently, somewhat to Corbett's chagrin, he began to pay his visits to them instead.

Then as the summer advanced, the fine weather suggested river picnics, and the young women arranged one every week. They even ventured under Matheson's influence to go out on a Sunday, starting in the forenoon, getting up as far as Chertsey, and not returning till late at night. Corbett, half delighted with the abandoned devilry of the proceeding, half terrified lest Wetherly Gardens should come to hear of it, Providence deal swift retribution, was always wholly surprised and relieved when they found themselves again ashore, as safe and comfortable as though the day had been a mere Monday or Wednesday. And if this immunity from consequences slightly shook Corbett's respect for Providence, it sensibly increased his respect for his friend.

Corbett would have enjoyed this summer extremely, but for the curious jealousy Minnie began to exhibit of his affection for Matheson. It seemed to him it could only be jealousy which made her intrude so needlessly on their *tête-à-têtes*, interrupt their conversation so pointedly, and so frequently reproach Corbett, in the privacy of the nuptial chamber, for monopolising all the attention of their guest.

"You're always so selfish," Minnie would complain.

Yet, reviewing the incidents of the evening—Matheson had been dining perhaps at "Braemar"—it seemed to Corbett that he had hardly had a chance to exchange a word with him at all. It seemed to Corbett that Lætitia had done all the talking; and her light volubility with Matheson, so different to the tongue-tiedness of her ordinary hours, her incessant and slightly meaningless laugh,

laugh, echoed in his ears at the back of Minnie's scoldings, until both were lost in sleep.

But when the problem of Minnie's vexation recurred to him next morning, he decided that the key to it could only be jealousy, and he was annoyed with himself that he could find no excuses for a failing at once so ridiculous and so petty. The true nature of the case never once crossed his mind, until Minnie unfolded it for him one day, abruptly and triumphantly.

"Well, it's all right. He's proposed at last."

"What do you mean? Who?" asked Corbett bewildered.

"Why, Jim Matheson, of course! Who else do you suppose? He proposed to Tish last night in the garden. You remember how long they were out there, after we came in? That was why."

Corbett was immensely surprised, even incredulous, although when he saw that his incredulity made his wife angry, he stifled it in his bosom.

After all, as she said with some asperity, why shouldn't Matheson be in love with Lætitia? Lætitia was a pretty girl . . . a good girl . . . yet somehow Corbett felt disappointed and depressed.

"You're such a selfish pig," Minnie told him; "you never think of anybody but yourself. You want to keep Tish here always."

Corbett feared he must be selfish, though scarcely in respect to Lætitia. In his heart he would have been very glad to see her married. But he didn't want Matheson to marry her.

"Jim's awfully in love," said Minnie, and it sounded odd to Corbett to hear his wife call Matheson "Jim." "He fell in love with her the very first moment he saw her. That's why he's been here so often. You thought he came to see you, I suppose!"

Her

Her husband's blank expression made her laugh.

"You *are* a pig!" she repeated. "You never do think of any one but yourself. Now hurry up and get dressed, and we'll go into town and dine at the Exhibition, and after dinner we'll go up in the Big Wheel."

"Is Letty coming too?" Corbett asked

"Don't be so silly! Of course not. She's expecting Jim. That's why I'm taking you out. You don't imagine they want your society, do you? Or mine?" she added as an afterthought, and with an unusual concession to civility.

Henceforward Corbett saw even less of Matheson than before. He was as fond of him as ever, but the friendship fell into abeyance.

It seemed too that Matheson tried to avoid him, and when he offered his congratulations on the engagement, the lover showed himself singularly reticent and cold. Corbett concluded he was nervous. He remembered being horribly nervous himself in the early days of his betrothal to Minnie Wray, when her mother had persisted in introducing him to a large circle at Highbury as "My daughter Margaret's *engagé*."

On the other hand, Corbett could not enough rejoice at the genial warmth which the event shed over the atmosphere of "Braemar." Both young women brightened up surprisingly, nor was there any lack of conversation between them now. Corbett thankfully gathered up such crumbs of talk as fell to his share, and first learned that the wedding was to take place in October when Minnie informed him she must have a new frock. She rewarded him for his immediate consent by treating him to a different description of how she would have it made, three nights in the week.

Loetitia thought of nothing but new frocks, and set about making

making some. A headless and armless idol, covered in scarlet linen, was produced from a cupboard, and reverentially enshrined in the dining-room. Both sisters were generally found on their knees before it, while a constant chattering went on in its praise. Innumerable yards of silk and velvet were snipped up in sacrifice, and the sofas and chairs were sown with needles and pins, perhaps to extract involuntary homage from those who would not otherwise bow the head. The tables were littered with books of ritual having woodcuts in the text and illuminated pictures slipped between the leaves.

There were constant visits to Richmond and Regent Street, much correspondence with milliners and dressmakers, a long succession of drapers' carts standing in the road, of porters laden with brown paper parcels passing up and down the path. Lætitia talked of Brighton for her wedding tour, and of having a conservatory added to the drawing-room of Holly Cottage. Friends and acquaintances called to felicitate her, and left to ask themselves what in the world Dr. Matheson could have seen in Letty Wray. Presents began to arrive, and a transitory gloom fell upon "Braemar" when Lætitia received two butter dishes of identical pattern from two different quarters, neither of which, on examination by the local clockmaker, proved to be silver.

In this endless discussion of details, it did occasionally cross Corbett's mind that that which might perhaps be considered an essential point, namely, Matheson's comfort and happiness, was somewhat lost sight of. But as he made no complaint, and maintained an equable demeanour, Corbett supposed it was all right. Every woman considered the acquisition of fallals an indispensable preliminary to marriage, and it was extravagant to look for an exception in Lætitia.

Matters stood thus, when turning into Wetherly Gardens one evening at the end of August, Corbett perceived, with a sudden heart-sinking, Minnie awaiting him at the gate. He recited the litany of all probable calamities, prayed for patience, and prepared his soul to endure the worst.

"What *do* you think, Jack," Minnie began, with immense blue eyes, and a voice that thrilled with intensity. "The most dreadful thing has happened——"

"Well, let me get in and sit down at least," said Corbett, dispiritedly. He was tired with the day's work, weary at the renewal of domestic worry. But the news which Minnie gave him was stimulating in its unexpectedness.

"Jim Matheson's been here to break off the engagement! He actually came to see Tish this afternoon and told her so himself. Isn't it monstrous? Isn't it disgraceful? And the presents come and everything. She's in a dreadful state. She's been crying on the bed ever since."

But Lætitia, hearing her brother-in-law's return, came down, her fringe, ominous sign, out of curl, her eyes red, her face disfigured from much weeping.

And when she began, brokenly, "He's thrown me over, Jack! He's jilted me, he's told me so to my face! Oh, it's *too* hard. How shall I ever hold up my head again?" then, Corbett's sympathy went out to her completely. But he wanted particulars. How had it come about! There had been some quarrel, surely some misunderstanding!

Lætitia declared there had been none. Why should she quarrel with Jim when she had been so happy, and everything had seemed so nice? No, he was tired of her, that was all. He had seen some one else perhaps, whom he fancied better, some one with more money. She wept anew, and stamped her foot upon the
the

the floor. "I wish you'd kill him, Jack, I wish you'd kill him!" she cried. "His conduct is infamous!"

Matheson's conduct as depicted by the young woman did seem infamous to Corbett, and after the first chaotic confusion of his mind had fallen into order again, his temper rose. His Irish pride was stung to the quick. No one had a right to treat a woman belonging to him with contumely. He would go up, at once, to Matheson, this very evening, and ask him what he meant by it. He would exact ample satisfaction.

He swallowed a hurried and innutritious meal, with Lætitia's tears salting every dish, and Minnie's reiterations ringing dirges in his ears. She and Lætitia wanted him to "do something" to Matheson; to kill him if possible, to horsewhip him certainly. Corbett was in a mood to fall in with their wishes, and the justice of their cause must have seemed unimpeachable to them all, since neither he nor they reflected for a moment that he could not have the smallest chance in a tussle with the transgressor, who overlooked him by a head and shoulders, and was nearly twice his size.

This confidence in righteousness is derived from the story-books, which teach us that in personal combat the evil-doer invariably succumbs, no matter what the disparity of physical conditions may be, although it must be added that in every properly written story-book it is always the hero who boasts of breadth of muscle and length of inches, while the villain's black little soul is clothed in an appropriately small and unlovely body.

Corbett, however, set off without any misgivings.

He found Matheson still at table, reading from a book propped up against the claret-jug. He refused the hand and the chair Matheson offered him, and came to the point at once.

"Is this true what I hear at home? That you came up this afternoon to break off your engagement with Lætitia?"

Matheson,

Matheson, who had flushed a little at the rejection of his handshake, admitted with evident embarrassment that it was true.

"And you've the—the cheek to tell me that, to my face?" said Corbett, turning red.

"I can't deny it, to your face."

"But what's your meaning, what's your motive, what has Letty done? What has happened since yesterday? You seemed all right yesterday," Corbett insisted.

"It's not Letty's—it's not Miss Wray's fault at all. It's my mistake. I've made the discovery we're not a bit suited to each other, that's all. And you ought to be thankful, as I am, that I've discovered it in time."

"Damn it!" exclaimed Corbett, and a V-shaped vein rose in the centre of his forehead, and his blue eyes darkened. "You come to my house, I make a friend of you, my wife and sister receive you into their intimacy, you ask the girl to be your wife. . . . I suppose you admit doing that?" Corbett interpolated in withering accents, "and now you throw her away like an old glove, break her heart, and expect me to be thankful? Damn it all, that's a bit steep."

"I shouldn't think I've broken her heart," said Matheson embarrassed again. "I should hope not." There was interrogation in his tone.

"She feels it acutely," said Corbett. "Any woman would. She's very——" he stopped, but Matheson had caught the unspoken word.

"Angry with me? Yes. But anger's a healthy sign. Anger doesn't break hearts."

"Upon my soul," cried Corbett amazed at such coolness, "I call your conduct craven, I call it infamous!" he added, remembering Lætitia's own word.

"Look

"Look here Jack," appealed the other, "can't you sit down? I want to talk the matter over with you, but it gets on my nerves to see you walking up and down the room like that."

Corbett, all unconscious of his restlessness, now stood still, but determined he would never sit down in Matheson's house again. Then he weakly subsided into the chair his friend pushed over to him.

"You call my conduct craven? I assure you I never had to make so large a demand upon my courage as when I called upon Lætitia to-day. But I said to myself, a little pluck now, a bad quarter of an hour to live through, and in all probability you save two lives from ruin. For we should have made each other miserable."

"Then why have engaged yourself?" asked Corbett with renewed heat.

"Yes . . . why . . . do you know, Jack, that the very morning of our engagement, five minutes even before the fateful moment, I'd no more idea . . . you know how such things can come about. The garden, the moonlight, a foolish word taken seriously. And then the apparent impossibility of drawing back, the reckless plunging deeper into the mire. . . . I don't deny I was attracted by Letty, interested in her. She is a pretty girl, an unusually pretty girl. But like most other girls she's a victim to her upbringing. Until you are all in all to an English girl you are nothing at all. She never reveals herself to you for a moment; speaks from the lips only; says the things she has been taught to say, that other women say. You've got to get engaged to a woman in England it seems, if you're ever to know anything about her. And I engaged myself, as I told you, in a moment of emotion, and then hopefully set to work to make the best

best of it. But I didn't succeed. I didn't find in Letty the qualities I consider necessary for domestic happiness."

"But Letty is a very good——"

Matheson interrupted with "In a way she's too good, too normal, too well-regulated. I could almost prefer a woman who had the capacity, at least, for being bad! It would denote some warmth, some passion, some soul. Now, I never was able to convince myself that Lætitia was fond of me. Oh, she liked me well enough. She was satisfied with my position, modest as it is, with my prospects. My profession pleased her, principally as she confessed to me, because it necessitates my keeping a carriage. But *fond* . . . do you think she is capable of a very passionate affection, Jack?

"Of course, I know this is going to do me a lot of harm. Twickenham, no doubt, will echo your verdict, and describe my conduct as infamous. I daresay I shall have to pull up stakes and go elsewhere. But for me, it has been the only conduct possible. I discovered I didn't love her. Wouldn't it be a crime to marry a woman you don't love? I saw we could never make each other happy. Wouldn't it be a folly to rush open-eyed into such misery as that?"

Which was, practically, the end of the matter, although the friends sat long over their whiskey and cigarettes, discussing all sublunary things. Corbett enjoyed a most delightful evening, and it had struck twelve before he set off homewards, glowing outside and in with the warmth which good spirits and good fellowship impart. He reaffirmed to his soul the old decision that Matheson was undoubtedly the cleverest, the most entertaining, the most lovable of men—and suddenly he remembered the mission on which he had been sent nearly four hours ago, simultaneously he realised its preposterous failure. All his happy
self-complacency

self-complacency radiated off into the night. Chilled and sobered and pricked by conscience, he stood for a moment with his hand upon the gate of "Braemar," looking up at the lighted windows of Minnie's room.

What was he going to say to her and to Lætitia? And, more perturbing question still, what when they should hear the truth, were his womenfolk going to say to him?

Two Prose Fancies

By Richard Le Gallienne

I—The Silver Girl

SOMETIMES when I have thought that the Sphinx's mouth is cruel, and could not forget its stern line for all her soft eyes, I have reassured myself with the memory of a day when I saw it so soft and tender with heavenly pity that I could have gone down on my knees then and there by the side of the luncheon table, where the champagne was already cooling in the ice-pail, and worshipped her—would have done so had I thought such public worship to her taste. It was no tenderness to me, but that was just why I valued it. Tender she has been to me, and stern anon, as I have merited; but, would you understand the heart of woman, know if it be soft or hard, you will not trust her tenderness (or fear her sternness) to yourself; you will watch, with a prayer in your heart, for her tenderness to others.

She came late to our lunch that day, and explained that she had travelled by omnibus. As she said the word omnibus, for some reason as yet mysterious to me, I saw the northern lights I love playing in the heaven of her face. I wondered why, but did not ask as yet, delaying, that I might watch those fairy fires of emotion, for her face was indeed like a star of which a little child

told me the other day. I think some one must have told him first, for as we looked through the window one starlit night, he communicated very confidentially that whenever any one in the world shed a tear of pure pity, God's angels caught it in lily-cups and carried it right up to heaven, and that when God had thus collected enough of them, he made them into a new star. "So," said the little boy, "there must have been a good deal of kind people in the world to cry all those stars."

It was of that story I thought as I said to the Sphinx :

"What is the matter, dear Madonna? Your face is the Star of Tears."

And then I ventured gently to tease her.

"What can have happened? No sooner did you speak the magic word 'omnibus,' than you were transfigured and taken from my sight in a silver cloud of tears. An omnibus does not usually awaken such tenderness, or call up northern lights to the face as one mentions it, . . . though," I added wistfully, "one has met passengers to and from heaven in its musty corners, travelled life's journey with them a penny stage, and lost them for ever. . . ."

"So," I further ventured, "may you have seemed to some fortunate fellow-passenger, an accidental companion of your wonder, as from your yellow throne by the driver. . . ."

"Oh, do be quiet," she said, with a little flash of steel. "How can you be so flippant," and then, noting the champagne, she exclaimed with fervour: "No wine for me to day! It's heartless, it's brutal. All the world is heartless and brutal . . . how selfish we all are. Poor fellow! . . . I wish you could have seen his face!"

"I sincerely wish I could," I said; "for then I should no doubt have understood why the words 'omnibus' and 'champagne,' not unfamiliar words, should . . . well, make you look so beautiful."

"Oh,

"Oh, forgive me! Haven't I told you?" she said, as absent-mindedly she watched the waiter filling her glass with champagne.

"Well," she continued, "you know the something Arms, where the bus always stops a minute or so on its way from Kensington. I was on top, near the driver, and, while we waited, my neighbour began to peel an orange and throw the pieces of peel down on to the pavement. Suddenly a dreadful, tattered figure of a man sprang out of some corner, and, eagerly picking up the pieces of peel, began ravenously to eat them, looking up hungrily for more. Poor fellow! he had quite a refined, gentle face, and I shouldn't have been surprised to hear him quote Horace, after the manner of Stevenson's gentlemen in distress. I was glad to see that the others noticed him too. Quite a murmur of sympathy sprang up amongst us, and a penny or two rang on the pavement. But it was the driver who did the thing that made me cry. He was one of those prosperous young drivers, with beaver hats and smart overcoats, and he had just lit a most well-to-do cigar. With the rest of us he had looked down on poor Lazarus, and for a moment, but only for a moment, with a certain contempt. Then a wonderful kindness came into his face, and, next minute, he had done a great deed—he had thrown Lazarus his newly-lit cigar."

"Splendid!" I ventured to interject.

"Yes, indeed!" she continued; "and I couldn't help telling him so. . . . But you should have seen the poor fellow's face as he picked it up. Evidently his first thought was that it had fallen by mistake, and he made as if to return it to his patron. It was an impossible dream that it could be for him—a mere rancid cigar-end had been a windfall, but this was practically a complete, unsmoked cigar. But the driver nodded reassuringly, and then
you

you should have seen the poor fellow's joy. There was almost a look of awe, that such fortune should have befallen him, and tears of gratitude sprang into his eyes. Really, I don't exaggerate a bit. I'd have given anything for you to have seen him—though it was heart-breaking, that terrible look of joy, such tragic joy. No look of misery or wretchedness could have touched one like that. Think how utterly, abjectly destitute one must be for a stranger's orange-peel to represent dessert, and an omnibus-driver's cigar set us crying for joy. . . .”

“Gentle heart,” I said. “I fear poor Lazarus did not keep his cigar for long. . . .”

“But why? . . .”

“Why? Is it not already among the stars, carried up by those angels who catch the tears of pity, and along with Uncle Toby's ‘damn,’ and such bric-a-brac, in God's museum of fair deeds? We shall see it shining down on us as the stars come out to-night. Yes! that will be a pretty astronomical theory to exchange with the little boy who told me that the stars are made of tears. Some are made of tears, I shall say, but some are the glowing ends of newly lit cigars, thrown down by good omnibus-drivers to poor, starving fellows who haven't a bed to sleep in, nor a dinner to eat, nor a heart to love them, and not even a single cigar left to put in their silver cigar-cases.”

“That driver is sure of heaven, anyhow,” said the Sphinx.

“Perhaps, dear, when the time comes for us to arrive there, we will find him driving the station bus—who knows? But it was a pretty story, I must say. That driver deserves to be decorated.”

“That's what I thought,” said the Sphinx, eagerly.

“Yes! We might start a new society: *The League of Kind Hearts; a Society for the Encouragement of Acts of Kindness*. How would that do? Or we might endow a fund to bear the name of
your

your 'bus-driver, and to be devoted in perpetuity to supplying destitute smokers with choice cigars."

"Yes," said the Sphinx, musingly, "that driver made me thoroughly ashamed of myself. I wish I was as sure of heaven as he is."

"But you *are* heaven," I whispered ; "and *à propos* of heaven, here is a little song which I wrote for you last night, and with which I propose presently to settle the bill. I call it the Silver Girl :

Whiter than whiteness was her breast,
And softer than new fallen snow,
So pure a peace, so deep a rest,
Yet purer peace below.

Her face was like a moon-white flower
That swayed upon an ivory stem,
Her hair a whispering silver shower,
Each foot a silver gem.

And in a fair white house of dreams,
With hallowed windows all of pearl,
She sat amid the haunted gleams,
That little silver girl ;

Sat singing songs of snowy white,
And watched all day, with soft blue eyes,
Her white doves flying in her sight,
And fed her butterflies.

Then when the long white day was passed,
The white world sleeping in the moon,
White bed, and long white sleep at last—
She will not waken soon.

II—Words Written to Music

IT is one of the many advantages of that simplicity of taste which is ignorance, that an incorrigible capacity for connoisseurship in the sister arts of cookery and music should enable one to be as happy with a bad dinner eaten to the sound of bad music, as others whose palates are attuned to the Neronian nightingales, and whose ears admit no harmonies less refined than the bejewelled harmonies of Chopin.

I have eaten dinners delicate as silverpoints, in rooms of canary-coloured quiet, where the candles burn hushedly in their little silken tents, and the soft voices of lovers rise and fall upon the dreaming ear ; but I confess that it was the soothing quiet, the healing tones of light and colour, and the face of the Sphinx irradiated by some dream of halcyon's tongues *à la Persane*, rather than the beautiful food, that inspired my passionate peace. Mere roast lamb, new potatoes and peas of living green had made me just as happy, gastronomically speaking, and I dare not mention what I order sometimes, and even day after day with a love that never tires, when I dine alone. Alone !

. . . the very word is like a bell

To toll me back from thee to my sole self ;

for even this very night have I dined alone in a great solitude of social faces, low necks, electric lights, and the spirited band that has given me more pleasure than any music in London, always excepting my Bayreuth, the barrel-organ. Yes ! strange as it may seem, I had come deliberately to hear this music, and secondarily to eat this dinner. What effect selections from Sullivan and "The Shop Girl," in collaboration with the three-and-sixpenny
table

table d'hôte, would have upon more educated digestions its concerns me not to inquire; on mine they produce a sort of agonised ecstasy of loneliness—and to-night as I sat at our little lonely table in a corner of the great gallery and looked out across the glittering peristyle, ate that dinner and listened to that music, I shuddered with joy at my fearful loneliness.

I might have dined with the Beautiful, or have sent a telegraphic invitation to the Witty, I might have sat at meat with the Wise; but no! I would dine instead with the memories of dinners that were gone, and as the music did Miltonic battle near the ceiling, marched with clashing tread, or danced on myriad silken feet, wailed like the winds of the world, or laughed like the sun, my solitude grew peopled awhile with shapes fair and kind, who sat with me and lifted the glass and gave me their deep eyes, ladies who had intelligence in love, as Dante wrote, ladies of great gentleness and consolation, for whom God be thanked. But always in my ears, whatever the piece that was a-playing, the music came sweeping with dark surge across my fantasy, as though a sudden wind had dashed open a warm window, and let in a black night of homeless seas.

For in truth one I loved was out to-night on dark seas. She fares out across an ocean I have never sailed, to a land of which no man knows; and for her voyage she has only her silver feet, walking the inky waters, and the great light of her holy face to guide her steps. Ah! that I were with her to-night, walking hand in hand those dark waters. Oh, wherefore slip away thus companionless, fearless little voyager? Was it that I was unworthy to voyage those seas with you, that the weight of my mortality would have dragged down your bright immortality—youngest of the immortals. . . . But from that sea which the Divine alone may tread, comes back no answer, nor
light

light of any star ; but there has stolen to my side and kissed my brow, a shape dearer than all the rest, dear beyond dearness, a little earthly-heavenly shape who always comes when the rest have gone, and loves to find me sitting alone. She it is who leans her cheek against mine as I try to read beautiful words out of the dead man's book at my side, she it is who whispers that we shall be too late to find a seat in the pit unless we hurry, and she it is who gaily takes my arm as we trot off together on happy feet. The great commissioner takes no note of her, he thinks I am alone ; besides we seldom go in hansoms, and seldom sit in stalls. . . . Enough, O, music ! be merciful. Be lonely no more, lest you break the heart of the lonely.

"Ah ! you have never seen her !" I whisper to myself as the waiter brings me my coffee—and I look at him again with a certain curiosity as I think that he has never seen her. Never to have seen her !

And then presently, as if in pity, the music will change, perhaps it will play some sustaining song of faith, and strike a sort of glory across one's heart, the haughty heart of sorrow ; or it will be human and gay, and suddenly turn this solitude of diners into a sort of family gathering of humanity, throwing open sad hearts that, like oneself, appear to be doing nothing but dine, and giving one glimpses into dreaming heads, linking all in one great friendship of common joys and sorrows, the one sweet beginning, and the one mysterious end.

In this mood faces one has seen more than once become friends, and I confess that the sight of certain waiters moving in their accustomed places almost moved me to tears. Such is the pathos of familiarity.

So my thoughts took another turn, and I fell to thinking with tenderness of the friends about town that the Sphinx and I had
made

made in our dinings—friends whom it had cost us but a few odd shillings and sixpences to make, yet friends we had fancied we might trust, and even seek in a day of need. If they found me starving some night in the streets, I think they would take me in; and I think I know a coffee-stall man who would give me an early-morning cup of coffee, and add a piece of cake, were I to come to him bare-footed some wintry dawn.

I have heard purists object to the smiles that are bought, as if smiles can or should be had for nothing, and as if it shows a bad nature in a waiter to smile more sweetly upon a shilling than a penny. After all, is he so far wrong in deeming the heart that prompts the shilling better worth a smile than the reluctant hand of copper? Besides, we are never so mean to ourselves as when we are mean to others. A few shillings per annum sown about town will surround the path of the diner with smiles year in and year out. The doors fly open as by magic at his approach, and the cosiest tables in a dozen restaurants are in perpetual reserve for him. I am even persuaded that a consistent generosity to cabmen gets known in due course among the fraternity, and that thus, in process of time, the nicest people may rely on getting the nicest hansoms—though this may be a dream. Certain I am that it brings luck to be kind to a pathetic race of men for whom I have a special tenderness, those amateur footmen, the cab-openers. Have you ever noticed the fine manners of some of them, and their lover-like gentleness with the silk skirts that it is theirs to save from soilure of muddy wheels? A practical head might reflect how much they do towards keeping down your wife's dressmaker's bills. I daresay they save her a dress a year—and yet they are not treated with gratitude as a race. How involuntarily one seems to assume that they will accept nothing over a penny, and how fingers, not penurious on other occasions, automatically

automatically reject silver as they ferret in pence-pockets for suitable alms. No ! not alms—payment, and sometimes poor payment, for a courtesy that adds another smile to your illusion of a smiling world.

Among the many lessons I have learnt from the Sphinx is one of the fair wage of the cab-opener. It was the very afternoon she had seen that cigar fall down from heaven, and her mood was thus the more attuned to pity. As we were about to drive away from the place of our lunching, having been ushered to our hansom by a tatterdemalion of distinguished manners, but marred unhappy countenance, I fumbled so long for the regulation twopence, that it seemed likely he should miss his reward or be run over in running after it. But at that moment the Sphinx's hand shot past mine and dropped something into the outstretched palm. The man took it mechanically, and in a second his face flashed surprise. Evidently she had given him something extravagant. She was watching for his look, and telegraphed a smile that she meant it. Then you never saw such a figure of grateful joy as that shabby fellow became. His face fairly shone, and for a few moments he ran by our cabside wildly waving his hat, with an indescribable emotion of affectionate thankfulness.

"What did you give him dear ?" I asked.

"Never mind !"

"It wasn't a sovereign ?"

"Never mind."

So I have never known what coin it was that thus transfigured him, but of this I am sure : that when the time of the great Terror has come to London, when the red flags wave on the barricades, and the puddles of red blood beneath the great guillotine in Trafalgar Square luridly catch the setting sun, the Sphinx and I will have a friend in that poor cab-opener.

There

There is another friend to whom we should fly for safety in those days of wrath. He, too, is a cab-opener, but, so to say, of higher rank—for he is the voluntary manager of a thriving cab-rank which we often have occasion to patronise. For some unknown reason he is always addressed as “Cap’n,” and we never omit the courtesy as we salute him. So we have come to know him as The Captain of the Cab Rank. He is a short, thick-set, sturdy little man, with an overcoat buttoned straight beneath his chin, hands deep in his pockets, a firm, determined step, and a fiery face. He walks his pavement like a veritable captain on his quarter-deck, and his “Hansom up!” rings out like a stern word of command. At the call a shining door of the tavern opposite is thrown open with a slam, and a wild figure of a driver clatters across in terrified haste, and with his head still wrapped in the warm glow he has just forsaken, he climbs his dark throne, and once more shakes the weary reins. Then, as the little Captain briskly shut us in, with a salute that seems to say that he has thus given us a successful start in life, and it is not his fault if we don’t go on as we’ve begun, he blows a shrill note upon his whistle, half to call up the next cab to its place in the rank, half to signalise our departure, as when sometimes a great boat sets out to sea they fire guns in the harbour, and excited crowds wave weeping handkerchiefs from the pier.

Yes! There are many faces I meet daily, faces I do business with and faces I take down to dinner, faces of the important and the brilliant, that I should miss much less than the little Captain of the Cab Rank. Our intercourse is of the slightest, we have little opportunities of studying each other’s nature, and yet he is strangely vivid in my consciousness, quite a necessary figure in my picture of the world—so stamped is every part of him with that most appealing and attaching of all qualities, that of our
common

common human nature. He has the great gift of character, and however poor and humble his lot, failure is surely no word to describe him, for he is a personality, and to be a personality is to have succeeded in life.

Yes! I often think of the Captain as I think of the famous characters in fiction, or notable figures in history; and I should feel very proud if I could believe he sometimes thought of me.

Well, well. . . . it is late. The bill, waiter, please! Good-night! Good-night!

